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ABSTRACT

Researchers report that fundamental reform is under way in perhaps one-third of Chicago public schools, involving more than 100,000 students. These sketches of schools where restructuring is taking place provide some clues to fundamental questions about educational change. The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 established local school councils and imposed goals, objectives, and outcomes to be addressed in 3-year improvement plans. Goals ranged from raising test scores to reducing dropouts and increasing parent participation. Profiles of five elementary schools, three high schools, a developmental center for the disabled, and a magnet elementary school for the arts indicate some common features in reform successes. On the whole, the schools are well anchored in their communities, involving parents and community members in their efforts. They are innovative and use a variety of strategies to promote the self-esteem, self-expression, and internal strengths of their students. At each school in this report, parent education is a big part of daily life. The leadership of the principal has also been an essential one in the ongoing reform efforts in all these schools. Sketches of the following schools are included: Hefferan Elementary; Amundsen High; Duprey Elementary; Flower Vocational; Nobel Elementary; Davis Development Center; Davis Elementary; Harper High; Howland School of Arts; and Clark Elementary. (SLD)

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SUCCESS On the Highway to Change

Sketches of Restructuring Schools

Hefferan Elementary
Amundsen High
Duprey Elementary
Flower Vocational
Nobel Elementary
Davis Development Center
Davis Elementary
Harper High
Howland School of the Arts
Clark Elementary

by Susan E. Klonsky

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SUCCESS

On the Highway to Change

Sketches of Restructuring Schools

by Susan E. Klonsky

Introduction

The aim in collecting these sketches of Chicago school reform was to look for clues to some fundamental questions facing educators and policy-makers. Is school reform working? Are schools doing better? What are the common features of schools that have seized the new opportunity for fundamental change?

I approach these questions with a bias. As a parent active in the school reform movement, and a two-term elected member of a local school council, I've been involved with the school system for nearly 20 years.

It is my experiences as a parent—with good and bad teachers and administrators, with the substandard conditions and obsolete textbooks my children have sometimes been exposed to—that most influence my judgment. My research cannot help but reflect the concerns of a parent who has endured enough frustration with school bureaucracy over two decades to be highly skeptical of "good news" about the school system.

Above all, I wanted to see how school reform is affecting children, and how they learn. If reform creates a more democratic atmosphere for adults, that's nice. If it makes teachers feel good about their work, that's nice, too. But if it does not improve learning conditions and outcomes for children, it fails in its most important mission. Parents will not accept the notion that "it's too soon" to begin to see changes in the classroom. At the schools described in this report, the impact of reform on learning is already evident.

"Restructuring is not just change. . . but fundamental change. Restructuring is not tinkering."

—Bruce McPherson, University of Illinois at Chicago Small Schools Workshop

A wide range of factors were considered in selecting these schools. This was not an attempt to analyze all the schools in the system, but rather to capture in a few sketches some of the departures from mediocrity and failure. There are literally dozens of schools throughout the system which, without fanfare, are reconceiving themselves, changing the ways in which teaching is undertaken and the ways the institutions are managed.

In fact, researchers report that fundamental reform is under way in perhaps one-third of Chicago public schools, involving more than 100,000 children. The Consortium on Chicago School Research, using surveys of principals and teachers, estimates that 36 percent of elementary schools are restructuring classrooms, compared with 15 percent before reform; 20 percent of schools are changing the work of teachers, as opposed to 9 percent prior to reform; 35 percent of principals report extensive community ties, as opposed to 13 percent before 1989.

"Anywhere from one-half to three-quarters of the schools have made at least some improvement," says Consortium Director Anthony Bryk of the University of Chicago, while "at least one quarter are 'left behind.' "

Some of the schools engaged in reform are part of wider networks. Organizations such as Designs for Change, the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center, the Center for School Improvement, the Teachers' Task Force, the Small Schools Workshop and the Comer School Development Project assist 65 elementary and high schools across the city, or roughly 10 percent of the schools.

Curricular programs such as the Chicago Algebra Project, Chicago Area Writing Project, Illinois Writing Project, Microsociety, Reading Recovery and Strategic Reading Project all challenge outmoded pedagogy and curriculum.

Countless schools are finding their own ways. Some are working closely with neighboring schools within clusters, centered on a particular high school or locality. Others are working on their own to try to reshape the school. Some begin with a sweeping vision of change, while others start small, concentrating on one element or

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one curricular area, such as language arts, math/science, or early childhood. For every highly publicized school, others are working quietly along the same path, and this makes taking the census of school change a daunting challenge.

Dozens of schools, both in networks and working individually, have received significant assistance in their reform efforts from the business and philanthropic sectors. It is difficult to calculate the number of local school council and faculty retreats, courses or conferences to make comprehensive restructuring plans, which have been supported by private philanthropy over the past four years.

In researching this report, I visited 33 Chicago public schools during the first quarter of 1993. I made at least one visit to each school, reviewed the school report card and the school improvement plan and met with members of the local school council and the faculty, the principal, and, in most cases, students. In each case, classroom observations were part of my investigation.

"Chicago is the place to make you appreciate at every turn the absolute opportunity which chaos affords—it is sheer Matter with no standards at all."

John Dewey, 1894

In looking at the schools, four questions were foremost:

- What kinds of changes are taking place that can be attributed to school reform?
- What kinds of events signal improvement in school performance?
- What are the obstacles to school improvement?
- What, if anything, do these improving schools have in common?

My focus was on self-reflection, planning, innovation and improvement. I looked for strengths and successes, choosing not to dwell on the obvious weaknesses and failings of each school—and each school, even the "stars" of the system, has its failings.

Geography, ethnicity and race were considered in selecting elementary and high schools from across the city. In some cases, schools were chosen because there simply had not been much reporting about their efforts. Some schools with restructuring well underway—such as the farsighted "schools-within-a-school" at Taft, Field, Price, Chicago Vocational and Whittier—are documented elsewhere.

But some high-profile schools are included—for example, Howland School for the Arts, whose fine-arts program is nationally recognized. Howland's comprehensive plan for school improvement, its use of cooperative learning and high technology in the classroom, and the use of school reform dollars to implement its plan, are all highly innovative and little understood.

Also included are a few schools with special populations or unique characteristics—special education schools, vocational high schools and particularly small or overcrowded schools—that show how school communities are confronting extraordinary challenges.

Some highly recommended schools did not find their way into this report because a close look left me with too many unanswered questions, or simply unimpressed. In a couple of cases, principals discouraged me from visiting their schools or declined to be interviewed.

I visited schools where I had been told great things were happening, only to arrive at scenes of squalor, chaos, hollering teachers and, once, a principal who told me, winking confidentially, "These kids are never going to make it."

In a couple of schools, I witnessed children being manhandled or cruelly ridiculed, and I endured the conflict every researcher experiences over whether and how to intervene.

Omitted from this report were schools that are "tinkering" with change—introducing a program here and there, an add-on or the latest fad, without developing a schoolwide plan. I received several calls from principals suggesting that their schools had a great showpiece that should be included in this report—a beautification project, a purchased reading program, a science fair or special assembly. Some of these were impressive but, confined to one classroom or one day, they hardly represented comprehensive change.

While it was not my purpose to evaluate the workings of the local school councils, all the schools discussed here have functioning councils—some quite peaceable, some contentious.

Inclusion in this report should not be construed as a commendation or award. There are no utopian schools among those described here, nor, to my knowledge, anywhere in the city. What makes these 10 schools outstanding is that they each have a map to guide them to excellence—clear-headed plans, strong and dedicated leadership and vital participation by parents and teachers.

Given adequate time and material support, these elements can form the basis for long-term improvement.

Susan E. Klonsky
Chicago
September 1994

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New Indicators of Change

How can we tell whether schools are getting better after five years of reform and a major shift of fiscal resources to Chicago's 560 public schools?

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 imposed upon each of the local school councils 34 goals, objectives and outcomes to be addressed in three-year improvement plans. These mandated goals ranged from raising standardized test scores to reducing the drop-out rate to increasing parent involvement and training. The law also included goals for new curricular content, expansion of teacher professionalism, and improvement of school climate, or conditions for learning. It was left to the local school councils to figure out how to reach these outcomes.

Prior to reform, only one yardstick was recognized for measuring school performance: scores on standardized tests, particularly the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Even though this single-minded approach has become discredited, the tendency to use a single measure for all schools persists. In turn, testing has driven the curriculum.

But in a diverse and complex system like Chicago's, needs and conditions vary so widely from school to school that any common measurement can become meaningless. Many Chicago principals believe their progress ought to be measured only against their own "personal best," and not against other schools or against the system as a whole.

Still others argue for point-to-point testing of students within each school. Did the student improve from 1992 to 1993? Did the class of first-graders improve from 1992 to 1993? Several principals cited in this report have created their own measurement and assessment systems to answer these questions.

"The standardized tests are a self-defeating instrument," observes Professor William Ayers of the University of Illinois at Chicago. "They're counting the wrong things. There is at best a tenuous connection between what happens over the course of a school year and how kids score on a test, and yet individual teachers get the credit or the blame."

Ayers believes that looking at input rather than outcome is a better way to measure school reform in its early stages. "We can measure with some certainty improvements in what is being done for and offered to children. We can focus on the environment and the school culture, for example, as well as on curriculum and teaching.

"In terms of environment, we can look for a school that is 'word-rich,' 'book-rich,' immersed in varied reading materials. In terms of the school culture, what kinds of expectations of students do the staff and parents have? Are they matching expectations? Is there a feeling of safety, of belonging, in the school? Does the principal know how to get access to resources for the school?

"Given these types of factors, over time . . . change will happen, and this will even begin to reflect itself in test scores," Ayers predicts.

Professor Jeanne Baxter of Northeastern Illinois University is another expert who believes standardized testing fails to adequately measure educational change.

"There have to be some indicators focusing on measurement of something we're doing *differently*—especially in the classroom. New indicators, not the tried and tired.

"One that is not easy to measure but that is relatively easy to spot is an improvement in the quality and quantity of staff development—staff development with a vision.

"The staff's perception of the principal," Baxter asserts, "is the most powerful correlate to improved outcomes. So number one, look at what they are doing to raise staff expectations. Look at the style of leadership. You have 'laissez-faire' principals, you have the permissive ones—but leadership means more than just giving permission. . . .

"The level of engagement of audiences within a school—are the staff actually there on Institute Days?"

Others have suggested counting the number of intelligent questions asked in faculty meetings or the number of articles being copied and circulated within the staff, or the level and quality of conversation in the teachers' lounge.

"Even the number of cars remaining in the teachers' parking lot one hour after dismissal time," says Warren Chapman of The Joyce Fundation, "ought to go up three or four months into the restructuring process."

While not all these ideas were used in this report, the spirit of measuring school reform in nontraditional ways guided the assessments.

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I received advice from a long list of respected educational researchers and reform activists, and the sin of omission worries me. For helpful comments, review, sharing articles, references, interviews, suggestions too numerous to recount here, thanks to Suzanne Davenport and Donald Moore of Designs for Change, to Anthony Bryk of the Consortium on Chicago Schools Research, to the late John Kotsakis of the Chicago Teachers Union and to Debbie Walsh of the CTU Quest Center, to Linda Lenz and Michael Klonsky of *CATALYST*, to Warren Chapman of the Joyce Foundation and Anne Hallett of the Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform, to Coretta McFerren of WSCORP, to Nancy Brandt of the Continental Bank Foundation, to John Ayers, and to Professors Bruce McPherson, William Ayers and Jeanne Baxter.

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S. K.

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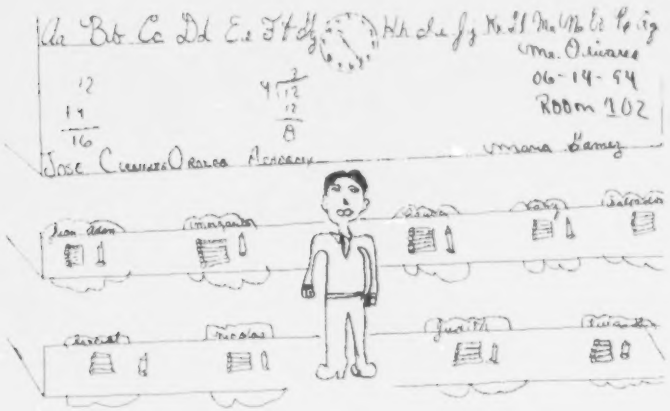
For example, I considered: How does the school building look, feel, smell; is it clean or dirty, decorated or drab, rundown or well-maintained? Is work by children on display? Are parents present throughout the building? Is there an early-childhood program? Is there gang graffiti on the walls? Are there soap and towels in the bathrooms? What kind of recreational space is available to the children—a gym? a playground? nothing?

In classrooms that were crowded, I looked for ways in which teachers had tried to create intimacy, to give children more individual attention. Also noted were signs of tracking—the sorting, labeling and channeling of children into groups with low or high academic expectations.



I looked for the presence of abundant and varied reading matter at all grade levels, for the use of "hands-on" materials and experiments. The use of technology, especially of computers, was observed, as was whether computers were being used for independent writing and exploration by students. I also looked to see whether students were given opportunities to express themselves through the visual and performing arts and journalism.

In the schools selected for this report, new strategies are replacing old ones, even with respect to testing. Despite the arguments against them, test scores remain the official indicator of school improvement in Chicago, and many administrators accept standardized testing as a fact of life.

Some use it to shine a bright light on areas of weakness. At Hefferan Elementary, seventh- and eighth-grade students were scheduled to take PSAT tests because the local school council wanted to impress upon them the seriousness of their responsibilities as students.

For the record, test scores are mostly low at the schools described in this report. However, at least two have recently emerged from the bottom 100 schools as ranked by test scores. And all the schools have embarked on structural changes that break with discredited institutional traditions endemic to Chicago public schools.

Editor's Note

The names of teachers, principals and parents cited in this report are real. The names of students have been changed to protect their privacy. There are two exceptions: The names of high school students Hector Escalera and Emery Young are used with their permission.

About the illustrations

The illustrations in this report were provided by Jennifer Jensen's class at Orozco Academy, in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, and by Vicki Tomko's class at Gladstone School on the West Side. Thanks also to Susan Ryan of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy for permission to reprint illustrations used in the publication, "Suggestions for Local School Councils."

Susan Klonsky *is a researcher and education writer at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory in Oak Brook, Illinois. She has written extensively about educational philanthropy, as editor of "Reform Watch," a publication of the Donors Forum of Chicago. Klonsky was co-author of* **What the Schools Will Do**, *an analysis of the school improvement plans of 1990, published by the Chicago Public Schools.*

Signs of success mean hope for the future

Imagine what life would be like for children in Chicago if their school days were filled with learning and self-discovery. If all teachers were using methods that enabled each child, regardless of ability or learning style, to be a successful student. If the curriculum helped all students to develop a deep base of knowledge and acquire the skills needed to be resourceful participants in a competitive world.

Imagine the self-esteem and confidence these children would feel if all teachers believed that all of them could be successful. What would it be like if school officials routinely involved parents to help educate their children? Imagine what Chicago's neighborhoods and future would look like if these advantages were available to all students.

If you want to know how powerful this kind of education can be in the lives of children, even those from communities of severe poverty and violence, I invite you to read this special report. You will learn about ten schools—reflective of many other schools in the city—where students, parents, teachers, principals, and local school councils are working together to make those imaginings real.

The quality of our children's education is improving today because an increasing number of Chicagoans are committed to changing our schools, just as parents, students, teachers, and others have changed the schools in this report. Along with business leaders, community groups, and other foundations, the MacArthur Foundation is pleased to support such efforts.

The schools highlighted here suggest to everyone concerned about Chicago's children that the investment in reform is beginning to pay dividends. And for those doing the day-to-day work to transform our schools, these examples give reason for hope and pride.

Peter Martinez
Senior Program Officer
Chicago Education Initiative
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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HELEN M. HEFFERAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Brightest Place in the Neighborhood

Address: 4409 W. Wilcox (West Garfield Park)
Student body: 679. 100% black, grades K-8.

Notable restructuring initiatives:

- A weekly staff development day for every teacher.
- Curricular reform including hands-on science, Japanese language and culture, 35 special-interest clubs.
- A full-time human relations coordinator to assist parents.

Helen M. Hefferan Elementary School fairly crackles with energy. An elaborate network of clubs, an extensive after-school and summer program, plus a well-developed parent involvement program keep adults and children working together throughout the building, which is open until 6 p.m. daily. Kindergartners learn Japanese, while fifth-graders perform laboratory dissections. Upon graduation, Hefferan students tend to go on to Chicago's academically strong high schools.

What is the secret to maintaining this intense level of productive activity? For one, teachers are treated as professionals, with big blocks of training and planning time built into their workday schedules. Also, the talents of parents and community volunteers support the work of the teachers. And expectations are high.

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Hefferan's faculty is divided into five instructional teams, and each team gets one day a week for study and planning. The results are new kinds of teaching, new experiences for children, high teacher morale and attendance, and a rate of student attendance that consistently exceeds state goals and city averages, and leads other schools in the subdistrict.

For example, kindergarten teacher Jonelle Graber used a Resource Day to take a skills workshop from a local arts agency. She fashioned a set of colorful batik wall hangings for her classroom, representing wildlife of Africa. On her next Resource Day, Graber shared her newly acquired know-how with the rest of her teaching team, enabling them to design similar classroom projects.

"I learned a terrific method that will let me transfer student art work to fabric," says Graber. "In a typical school, I'd never have time or been encouraged to explore an art medium like this."

While Graber and her teammates engage in professional development or planning, their students enjoy a "Resource Day." "It's like day camp," explains Principal Patricia Harvey. (Mrs. Harvey was recently appointed Special Assistant to Supt. Argie Johnson.) "On Resource Day, you're at art, music, gym, library and [computer] lab."

At Hefferan, telephones are another sign that teachers are treated as professionals; every classroom has one. Teachers may use the phones at their discretion to talk with parents, check on absent children, get help in an emergency or even conduct personal business—like making a doctor's appointment or checking on their own children.

"If you work in a business environment, a corporate office, it's understood that a reasonable, limited amount of phoning is done for personal reasons," says Harvey. "To prohibit teachers from having contact with the outside world is to treat them like children."

◆

A poster on a bulletin board outside a first-grade classroom attests to a challenge that Hefferan and many other Chicago public schools face. "I have a dream," a girl named Latnika wrote on her poster, "that no one will shoot at our windows."

"A lot of our children have seen real violence in their lives," Harvey says. "There was a day when I held the kids back at dismissal time because there was a dead body lying outside the school."

Hefferan took up the challenge by creating the position of human relations coordinator—not only to deal with the violence, but also to address problems of poverty, illness and absenteeism. Harvey hired community volunteer Denise Ferguson, formerly on the staff of the Public Guardian's office.

In one recent case, Ferguson visited a mother whose child was missing school three and four days a week. "She wouldn't really tell me what the problem was. . . . Finally I got the picture: They had no heat in their apartment. They had no phone. I was able to get her heat turned back on."

Ferguson's salary is paid out of the school's allotment of state Chapter I money. "It's well worth it in increased rates of attendance, parent involvement and getting individual children the diagnostic and social services they need," says Harvey. "Schools today have to play that role. We have to look at the whole child."

◆

Hefferan boasts a large group of actively involved parents, including local school council members and the Hefferan Alumni Association.

A substantial number of mothers who attended Hefferan as children now lead volunteers in the school. Each of 35 activity clubs has a parent leader. Parents teach movement, dance and several of the creative arts classes, as well as run before- and after-school tutoring programs for children.

Neighbors of the school also have been enlisted as volunteers in the building. For example, George Taylor, 20, is in the school five hours a day five days a week as a volunteer art instructor. A talented artist, he recently designed a logo for the school.

Demond Wilson, 20, is also a full-time school volunteer. "I do whatever needs doing," he says. The uncle of a Hefferan child, Wilson works nights, and "instead of lying around the house all day, I'm here."

Hefferan frequently invites community members in for "Proud To Read Aloud" days. For a Black History Month celebration, some 50 African-American men spent a morning in Hefferan classrooms, reading to children and discussing their careers, what it means to be grown up and what it means to be a man. The school was filled with entrepreneurs, architects, ministers, social workers, sheriff's police and writers. Also on hand were a group of fraternity brothers from Alpha Phi Alpha and a delegation of male senior class members from Providence St. Mel High School.

It's all part of the school's effort to build a broad network of community support. "We never know the impact that we have," Harvey tells classroom visitors. "We leave a piece of our soul with the children."

Hefferan volunteer Desavieu Porter works for Family Rescue, an agency that combats domestic violence. Porter describes himself as "an ex-idiot in high school." With co-worker Anthony Rogers, he talks with boys and girls about family violence, "and other things that matter to them."

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In an unusual innovation, every child at Hefferan from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade receives daily instruction in Japanese language and culture. One grade level per year will be added to the program, so that by 1998, every Hefferan student will receive nine years of such instruction.

The school's Japanese teacher is 22-year-old Yoshio Yokozawa. A graduate of Lane Technical High School, Yokozawa brings a sense of fun as he makes his rounds of the classrooms. In one, he taught third-graders to use chopsticks as part of their preparation for a field trip to an Asian supermarket, where they ate lunch and saw consumer goods and foods from Asian countries.

The children have learned their numbers up to 20 in Japanese, and are working on telling time. Yokozawa repeatedly alludes to the wide world of their future. "You'll need to know this when you visit Japan," or, "When you see this sign in Japan, you'll know what it means." Even kindergartners know the Japanese "alphabet" and second-graders can interpret the sounds on a phonics chart in Japanese, and locate Japan on a globe.

A favorite activity is animal sounds in Japanese. The teacher writes a Japanese pictogram on the board, then the children identify the animal, say its Japanese name, sing it, and make the animal's sound as it is pronounced in Japan. Giggles abound. Yokozawa, who sports a ponytail and an earring, is a whirl of activity—springing like a frog, leaping around the room, drawing out the shyer kids. Children are happy to see him arrive at their classrooms; they know Japanese lessons mean games, songs, lots of action—and a dream about their future.

Pat Harvey takes a long view of the Japanese program: "Is Japanese a luxury for our students? We selected this language on purpose. In Chicago and elsewhere, a huge need will exist for minority employees who speak Japanese and who are familiar with Japanese culture. We are definitely equipping our children with a competitive edge."

Instilling a world outlook is another goal. The Japanese culture and language contrast sharply with that of African-Americans, and Hefferan students are gaining a new perspective on the size and scope of the world community. In a few years, Harvey hopes to begin sponsoring student visits to Japan.

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Hefferan's emphasis on cooperative learning was what attracted Paul Scott, a young science teacher from Virginia, to the school. Harvey conducted a four-month national search to find the right teacher for Hefferan's sparkling new science lab, donated by Turner Construction and Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. Scott has the room crawling with snakes, ferrets, hamsters, scorpions, frogs, fish, snails—even a chubby Norway rat, described by the fifth-graders as "friendly."

The children are keeping individual logs, collecting data on the growth of animals and plants and breeding live food for the animals that need worms and insects. Children monitor temperatures, life cycles, water and food consumption. They record daily observations and design experiments.

There are no textbooks in this science lab. "We're all hands-on here," Scott explains, "We believe in 'guided discovery.' I'm the guide."

The science program is equal or superior to those offered in affluent suburban schools, and it is typical of what might be offered only to the so-called gifted students at other neighborhood schools in Chicago. But at Hefferan, hands-on science is for *all* students.

Down the hall is the remedial math program, also known as the Hefferan School Store. It is staffed by a teacher and tended by students needing extra assistance in math. The store has a real cash register and a generous inventory of school supplies and small toys. "Kids view it as such a treat to work here," says Harvey. "They are learning applied math, real-world problem-solving, and it's a prestige event to work at the store. You're not stigmatized," or identified as a "math dummy."

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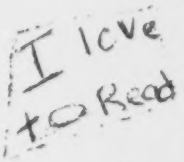
Hefferan teachers still assess student learning in fairly traditional ways, using frequent check-up tests. But with teachers' weekly planning days, they have time to study results, discuss individual children and devise new teaching strategies. Assessment is used to improve instruction.



"To track student progress," Harvey says, "you really have to break out the numbers, classroom by classroom, child by child." This builds accountability into each classroom.

Hefferan students will also take the ACT and PSAT examinations in the eighth grade, so that they can see what these high-stakes tests will be like and buckle down before they hit high school. "We may not like testing," Harvey says, "but our students need to be test-smart and competitive. We believe in starting early to give them confidence as well as the necessary competence."

When Harvey was hired as principal at Hefferan, the entire school was composed of split-grade classrooms that grouped students by achievement level. For example, "high" third-graders were grouped with "low" fourth-graders. No teachers were teaching at grade level; all were using books and materials below their assigned grade levels.

"I felt that the kids were not being challenged to do their best," Harvey recalls. "I mandated that the whole staff teach *on grade level*, and that they stop tracking students into so-called ability groups."

"What we want," Harvey concludes, "is to show this country that minority students can learn at acceptable levels. My motto is, 'A month for a month'—a month of growth for a month of school."

During the first four months of the first local school council term, the school spent $83,000 on new textbooks and 35 computers. The engineer and his staff also painted and refurbished the building, which today is attractive, clean and safe inside. "This school looks better today than it did when I went here as a child," reports a mother active in the Hefferan Alumni Club.

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Walking the halls of Hefferan, one gets a feeling of dynamic forces at work. Many resources have been assembled, not in a piecemeal fashion, but in the service of a shared vision: of cooperative learning, both by children and by adults; of teachers who are respected for their talents and free to develop them; and of parents whose participation is valued. But above all, it is a vision in which each child is cherished.

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ROALD AMUNDSEN HIGH SCHOOL

Tightening Up, Buckling Down

Address: 5110 N. Damen (Ravenswood)
Student Body: 1,700. 46% Hispanic, 27% white, 15% black, 10% Asian, 1% Native American.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Environmental studies curriculum/whole-school geography studies.
- Schoolwide security plan for reduction of violence and gang crimes.
- Restructured school day, expanded course offerings.

Hector Escalera is intense, enthusiastic and 18. A senior, he is dressed for business in white shirt and conservative tie. "Trust me," he says, "reform is the best thing that ever happened to this school. It's the only hope for this school." You might even say that school reform saved Hector Escalera.

Hector is a former gang member. As a freshman, he rose to the leadership of the Latin Kings at Amundsen. "The old principal would see us fighting right in front of him. We fought the Vicelords, the GDs [Gangster Disciples]. He didn't care. It was like he was thinking, 'Let them kill each other.' When you tried to explain your side to him, he was, like, 'You're expelled. I don't want to hear it.' " Midway through Hector's freshman year, he was expelled and jailed.

Then Amundsen got a new principal. Ed Klunk, a former biology teacher and assistant principal, announced a "zero tolerance" policy for gang activity and gang representation. The local school council adopted a resolution to make the school gang-free, setting forth strict rules on student apparel and behavior. Among its measures was a ban on student transfers in or out of Amundsen for gang-related reasons, unless the students agreed to cooperate with police. "Each student accepted or transferred for such reasons," the council ruled, "shall agree to cooperate fully with the police. . . [incoming students] shall sign a performance contract with the school which shall be monitored for compliance."

Abandoned as a child, Hector grew up street smart, with no family other than the gang. His keen intelligence was spotted by teachers, but as he puts it, "I was in trouble *a lot*." Arriving at Amundsen after Andersen Elementary, Hector was in the principal's office "all the time," a self-described "soldier of the gang."

After Hector was expelled, a lunchroom employee took a personal interest in the troubled youngster. She and her husband adopted him and appealed to the new principal to take another look at Hector. Klunk, reasoning that "you shouldn't be in the business of getting rid of kids," allowed Hector to return to school and make a clean start.

"It was like Mr. Klunk gave me another chance at life," Hector says, "and I promised him I wouldn't let him down." He joined forces with ASPIRA, Inc., an agency working with Latino youths. He helped organize Amundsen's Puerto Rican students and then persuaded all the Latino students—over a dozen nationalities—to unify in a single club on campus. "We put a total end to the fighting in 1990," he says.

In 1991, Hector became the elected student representative on the Amundsen Local School Council and planned to enter community college after graduation and continue on to a four-year school. He worked as a tour guide on weekends at the Chicago Academy of Sciences. Science, especially zoology, has become a passion for him. (Hector is now a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago.)

Amundsen is a vastly better school today because of school reform, which enabled the local school council to hire the kind of principal it needed. And reform is why Ed Klunk agreed to take the post.

Klunk had been a teacher at Amundsen for more than 20 years. "My first love is teaching biology," he says. A trained naturalist, he wanted an opportunity to translate his vision of environmental education into reality at Amundsen, and reform made it possible to develop such a curriculum. "School reform," Klunk says, "is the only reason I took the job as principal."

Ray Carrell, a parent on the Amundsen council, recalls that the biggest factor in selecting Klunk was the respect that his former students had for him, and his reputation as a "hard-nosed disciplinarian." He has brought order to Amundsen, which has few obvious signs of the hostilities that are taking lives elsewhere in the city.

With a student population roughly 46 percent Latino (of whom one fourth are Mexican), 27 percent white, 15 percent African-American and 10 percent Asian, the school is socially complex. Many of its students are recent arrivals to this country; the student body includes immigrants from 40 countries speaking at least 25 languages. Self-contained bilingual education classes are offered in Spanish, Korean, Romanian and Vietnamese. Another 300 students are enrolled in English-as-a-Second-Language classes.

"You can see that if we ignore it, the potential for all kinds of social explosions is present," Klunk says. "The biggest mistake a school can make is denial. There is no Chicago public school that can honestly say it has no gang problem. It's in our community, so it's in our schools. That's number one.

"Second point: You have to deal with conflict quickly. Don't let it build up. I believe in bringing the involved individuals into a room quickly, making them talk to each other. I involve the police as a visible presence around this school.

"The biggest problem is the subtle intimidation of students that goes on constantly. This is why we don't tolerate any gang symbols or apparel. We spell it out to the students."

Klunk has used part of the school's $700,000 discretionary fund to hire security assistants; until 1992, the School Board paid for security monitors. Klunk also has had to use the school's own money to pay for truancy staff, which the School Board also cut from its budget in 1992.

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Bringing Amundsen's gang-related problems under control enabled Klunk to better pursue his main goal—using environmental issues to revitalize the curriculum. "It's a way to engage students," he says. "It's part of being an informed adult, a decision maker in today's world."

The school received money from the School Board's Options for Knowledge desegregation funds to hire additional staff for the program, and won a grant of $12,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency, which funds an Ecological Citizenship Program in partnership with the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

Chief among Klunk's initiatives is a requirement that all ninth-grade students take a course in environmental geography. "The principal asked us to infuse this subject matter into the curriculum without sacrificing time on basic skills," teacher Janet Fennerty says. "I believe we are probably unique in the city in providing every student with geography. We even have a bilingual geography teacher." Ecology is offered as the second-year science course.

When he first proposed the program, Klunk says, he was asked, "What are you going to take away from the students in order to put

environmental studies in?"

"That's missing the point," Klunk observes. "Why would geography somehow detract from language arts or mathematics? My hope is that teachers will find new ways to use the environmental content across curricular areas." Not all his teachers have "bought in," Klunk admits, and he emphasizes that participation is voluntary.

When the school council first applied for Options funding, Amundsen's delegate to the Chicago Teachers Union opposed it. He raised concerns as to the future job security and seniority of teachers not covered by the special protection of Options positions. However, no teachers lost their positions during the reorientation of Amundsen's curriculum.

To accommodate the new, expanded curriculum, Amundsen took study halls out of students' schedules and programmed them for an average of almost seven regular classes a day. That happened before the Board of Education imposed a citywide scheduling change that also reduced study halls but made it difficult for students to sign up for more than six courses.

"One of the biggest wastes in this system is where you have kids sitting in multiple study halls all day," Klunk says, commenting on the old days.

Since the advent of reform, Klunk says, instructional time at Amundsen has increased 25 to 30 percent, and study hall time has been cut by 30 to 40 percent.

Also, Chapter I money paved the way for a library expansion, creation of a reading lab and after-school tutoring for more than 100 students a day.

The new curricular emphasis has energized the school's extracurricular life, too. Janet Fennerty sponsors the Ecology Club, which began the school year with seven student members and is now up to about 50. On a dreary Saturday in March, with a blizzard battering the city, 200 Amundsen students showed up at school for a day-long environmental conference featuring speakers on global warming, vegetarianism, ozone depletion, Native American land rights, the Illinois Rivers Project and a dozen other related topics and agencies.

For Earth Day 1993, students were involved in months of planning. Indoors, there were panels and workshops. Outside, other students planted a prairie on the south side of the building. By its own admission, the Amundsen administration had "stuck its neck out," giving students the choice of leaving early or staying for the activities. More than 1,300 of the school's 1,700 students elected to stay for the whole day, making Amundsen's Earth Day event the largest in Illinois.

The combination of revitalized curriculum and improved school security has brought an increase in the number of students applying to Amundsen. The administration reports several hundred requests from parents wishing to transfer their children in from other North Side high schools.

"We want Amundsen to be the school you *want* your child to attend, because of its academic reputation," says Klunk. "We want it to be seen as the very desirable school for this area of town . . . a diverse school that serves all its students, a beautiful, safe and comfortable building, a school where you can take [advanced placement] courses—no need to ride a bus to someplace else."

ANA ROQUE DUPREY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Great Stuff in Small Spaces

Address: 1614 N. Washtenaw (Wicker Park)
Student Body: 455. 95% Hispanic, 4% black, 1% white.
Grades K-8.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Integration of curriculum, schoolwide thematic units
- Teachers designing the curriculum
- Democratic participation, respect for students' ideas
- Bilingual student publications at all levels

Ana Roque Duprey, housed in the former St. Fidelis Parish School, lacks many of the basic components that define "school"—playground, science lab, auditorium, gym. But in contrast to its minimal physical attributes, the school is developing an expansive curriculum, one that weaves together language arts, math, science and social studies. And it's doing it in two languages, English and Spanish.

John Carr's sixth-grade classroom illustrates this approach. During one typical science period, students were putting the finishing touches on their "novels." Jaime and Cesar proudly exhibited their illustrated book, *The True Story of Itchy and Droopy*. It's a fanciful story about the adventures of two drops of water, but it also demonstrates the children's grasp of the phases of the water cycle. The class has created books, complete with dedication pages ("Dedicated to my aunts and uncles in Mexico" and "To my family in Puerto Rico") and elaborate autobiographies of the authors. Carr binds the books and laminates the covers for permanent display. His classroom is lined with projects like these—children's work that blurs the boundaries between subject areas. It's clear that the teacher has tapped a vein of energy.

A similar blend of subject matter is occurring in another part of the school, where a gigantic graph of paper-doll cutouts runs the length of a hallway and winds around a corner. Each row of dolls has been carefully cut and colored with crayons and markers. Fifteen fifth-graders are seated in the hallway for a math lesson, Duprey-style. "What kind of graph have we got here?" asks teacher Jennifer Mundt. "It's a pictograph," responds Arturo. "How many people does each cutout stand for?" she asks. "One million," says Arturo. As the questioning proceeds, it's clear that the students understand the data presented by this graph of the growth of immigration into the United States.

Then the discussion takes a new tack. "Why did these people come here?" asks Mundt. "For opportunity, to get more money," says one child. "Well the African ones didn't have any choice," observes another. "They got brung here." The conversation, guided gently, extends into the waves of immigration and the ideas of freedom of religion, expression and opportunity. Quite a math lesson.

Meanwhile, the other half of this fifth-grade class is with Belinda Carucci, Mundt's partner in team teaching. They're working on history—or is it journalism? Before them is a reproduction of a newspaper from 1892. The lead article is about child labor in the factories. A friendly debate breaks out. Would you rather live now or then? Gregory is envious of the kids back then, who "didn't have to go to school"; he wishes he could go get a job in a factory now. The teacher lets the discussion weave and roll. She does not attempt to impose her opinion, but lets the youngsters play with the ideas.

Students' poetry adorns the classroom walls; it is interspersed with works by Langston Hughes. "WHAT IS A SIMILE?" asks one poster. Children have written their answers and examples on the poster ("I need a simile like I need a million bucks"). Gregory volunteers to demonstrate the difference between a simile and a metaphor: "In a simile, you have to say something is *like* something else, but in a metaphor you say something *is* something else—to give someone the idea." Gregory continues his demonstration: "Like if I say, 'You are a calendar.' It doesn't mean I really think you are an actual paper calendar. But it might mean I really think you act like a calendar." At age 10, Gregory has grasped a distinction that eludes many college English students.

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The room is literally stuffed with things to do. In a sunny window is "The Farm," a planter box full of bean vines, sweet potatoes and sunflowers. Bottled water has to be brought in because there is no sink.

These children, their teacher tells a visitor, are the "lowest" bilingual students in the school. They have recently emerged from three years of Spanish-only instruction. They are both lively and inquisitive, as their teachers lead them in exploring language, concepts and content areas.

The language arts emphasis at Duprey is on authentic writing—writing with a real purpose, for a real audience—in both languages. About one-third of the staff has participated in training by the Chicago Area Writing Project. The school also has used state Chapter I money to lease extra rooms to create a library—and to stock it—and a computer lab, where students produce a variety of desktop publications both in Spanish and English. (The Board of Education pays only for regular classroom space.)

First thing every morning, the entire school has a 45-minute reading period. It's an all-hands-on-deck approach: Every classroom teacher—as well as the assistant principal, the physical education teacher, the social worker and the counselor—works with a small reading group, either in Spanish or in English. Individual attention is especially important, as children at all grade levels are struggling to master a new language as well as reading skills. Each grade has a smattering of new U.S. arrivals, too; some had not attended school in their native countries.

Duprey's staff of 20 meets in teams to figure out ways to teach all subjects through thematic units, with the theme changing monthly. Recently, preparations were under way for an "Earth Month," with a variety of activities suggested by teachers for each grade level. A full-time curriculum coordinator, hired with state Chapter I funds, oversees this effort, ensuring continuity among teams.

The small school receives a substantial sum of state Chapter I dollars—about $300,000 and growing; federal Chapter I brings in another $270,000. In addition to buying space and a curriculum coordinator, the money has paid for additional classroom teachers, teacher aides, a full-time art teacher and books.

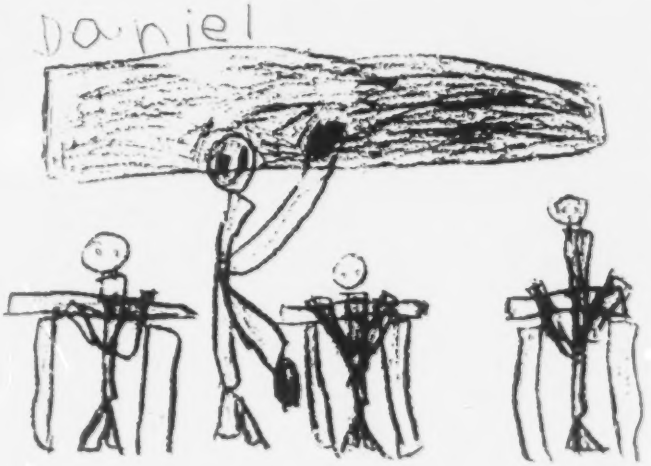
To Principal Gloria Roman, the most important change brought by school reform is the new emphasis on broad-based planning. "We decide collectively, as much as possible, what the school will be like, what the students will learn, how we will treat each other," she explains. Duprey's local school council has received assistance in its planning process from Designs For Change, a school reform organization. "It's a very democratic and participatory school," says Suzanne Davenport, a Designs for Change representative who observed staff meetings and council meetings. "The opinions of the staff, parents and students are really heard."

At one evening session, the council sought views on the school improvement plan. Students were able to express their desires about their school—on everything from the discipline and the apparel code to class offerings and after-school activities.

Meanwhile, the school continues to struggle with the limitations of its physical plant. The Board of Education, in the summer of 1988, leased part of the shuttered St. Fidelis to provide additional space for 450 children from six overcrowded schools—Cameron, Funston, Monroe, Mozart, Nixon and Nobel. After a local school council was elected, the school became Ana Roque Duprey School, named after the noted Puerto Rican nationalist, feminist and author.

The school does not have a gym, so a regular classroom is used instead. An experiment with a makeshift basketball hoop failed because the ball kept hitting the low-slung fluorescent light fixtures. However, Duprey teams have taken top honors in softball and floor hockey in the District 3 police leagues. Assemblies are held across the street in a parish hall.

With no playground, supervised outdoor recess is virtually impossible. "This means kids don't get to blow off steam, which is so important to their concentration and self-control," notes Roman, who was tapped by the Board of Education to organize the school and then was selected by the local school council. "We're negotiating for the use of a parking lot to be turned into a playground."



Upper-grade science teacher Jose Rodriguez is hoping money can be found to construct a science lab; he is worried that, without one, his children will be ill-prepared for high school science.

To cap it all off . . .

The tiny office of Principal Gloria Roman is filled with paintings from her native Puerto Rico, mementos from students, the usual stacks of folders and files. But atop her bookcase rests a colorful pile of baseball caps bearing sports team logos—dozens of hats confiscated from Duprey Elementary students.

"I take their hats and I call their parents into my office," Roman explains. "When they come in, I give them this article from the *Sun-Times* about a kid who was murdered over a baseball cap. A lot of parents don't realize this can be a gang emblem, they don't realize their child could be in danger. Then I offer them their child's hat back, and as you can see, many choose to leave the hat here. So I have a collection."

LUCY FLOWER VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Incubator for Economic Development

Address: 3545 W. Fulton (East Garfield Park)
Student Body: 1,000. 100% black.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Modernized vocational curriculum, stressing community economic development
- Coalition of Essential Schools planning process
- Integrated curriculum

If you run out of notebook paper at Lucy Flower Vocational High School, you go down to the student store. Nothing so unusual about that. But at Flower, the school store, called the "Scholastic Shop," is owned and operated by students. When they graduate, the young entrepreneurs will be able to cash in their equity for scholarship money.

The Scholastic Shop, which sells snacks, juices and school supplies, has some 500 customers a day "because there's no stores or restaurants around here," reports co-owner Emery Young, who plans to major in business at Chicago State University after graduation. "Lucky for us, a lot of students come to school unprepared," he adds with a grin.

Then there's the Flower Pot Cafe, also owned and operated by students. Outfitted with $38,000 in state of the art equipment, the cafe opened in April 1993, following a kick-off party thrown by the Society of Les Dames d'Escoffier, an organization of food, wine and hospitality professionals and gourmet cooks.

If you've got some spare bucks, you can deposit them in the school's Credit-Teens Credit Union, a student-run branch of the Austin-West Garfield Credit Union. With more than $8,000 in deposits from some 200 students, the credit union was preparing recently to make its first loans—maximum amount, $300.

Meanwhile, students in Lucy Flower's food service lab and its floral design shop have prepared food and centerpieces for parties as large as 500. Flower students handled the creole catering and made the delightful Mardi Gras-style floral decor for this year's fundraiser for Bethel New Life, a housing agency, at the Garfield Park Conservatory.

Over at the Franklin-Drake Apartments, a team of students from Flower in Action, a landscaping and building trades concern, worked daily last summer to clean and renovate part of the building and plant new flower beds. Afterward, the entrance to this senior citizens' building, run by the Chicago Housing Authority, looked as attractive as that of any Gold Coast condo building.

Back at the school, the SWAT Shop, short for Students Willing to Assist Teachers and Others, won a contract to print an 80,000-piece mailing for the Board of Education. They chose their own crew managers and timekeeper.

The SWAT Shop, an information-processing firm with expertise in word processing, electronic spreadsheets and other office support activities, has a 22-member advisory committee, drawn from some of the city's major companies. In addition to helping shape the program committee members seek job orders from their own companies and summer jobs for SWAT Shop students.

With all these business ventures, Lucy Flower is a virtual incubator of commerce in the economically depressed West Garfield Park community. Nationally, the school is viewed as a testing ground for entrepreneurial training—a reputation enhanced by the visit in February 1994 of Vice President Al Gore.

Flower's development as a top vocational school began in 1980 when its local school council tapped Dorothy Williams, a 20-year business teacher at Flower, as principal; she was chosen largely on the strength of her independent-mindedness and her insistence on "real-world jobs."

During Williams's first year as principal Flower's school community took three important, interrelated actions.

First, with a unanimous vote by the faculty, the school joined the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national network of schools in which students are seen as workers rather than recipients of information delivered by teachers. And staff members adopt several roles, including teacher, counselor and manager, as part of their commitment to the whole school.

Second, the entire school community undertook a yearlong curriculum planning process—which Williams says never would have happened before reform. "Who ever heard of asking students what they want in the curriculum?" she says. By doing so, "We have a clear mandate for these programs."

Third, the faculty developed a proposal for a major grant under the federal Carl D Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, which aims to raise the level of vocational education by stressing the integration of vocational and academic subjects and by requiring schools to provide students with an understanding of "all aspects of the industry" in their chosen field.

"The Perkins Act is a mandate for real curricular integration," says Williams. "We are obliged to address all the issues facing business and industry, such as the environmental impact of our ventures, fair labor practices and so on."

Also during Williams's first year, Lucy Flower wound up on the superintendent's "hit list" of schools to be closed in August 1991. Undeterred, Williams and her leadership team, which includes a sizeable contingent of students, went to work enlisting the help of community organizations, businesses and university business departments to get the planned enterprises off the ground. The two community representatives on the school's local school council—Lafayette Ford, who works with the Executive Service Corps of Chicago, and Michelle Larry, an employee at United Airlines—were particularly active on the business front.

Flower worked its way off the hit list. But the task of gaining permission from Pershing Road to open the Scholastic Shop, the first of the ventures, was lengthy and frustrating, because no comparable program existed anywhere in the school system.

By September 1993, all the business ventures were up and running, and every student, in consultation with his or her parents or guardians, selected a career path.

"You can create your own jobs; that's part of the message at Lucy Flower," says Professor Clarence Fitch of Chicago State University, an expert in curriculum who is working with the school. "This is not a menial, dead-end vocational program. It gets students prepared for work, and it also gets them thinking about entrepreneurship.

"The skillful teacher," he adds, "can use the ventures program to capture the students' attention, and then hold their attention to teach reading, writing and mathematics around very concrete applications. In this context, students learn what it takes to become business managers or owners. And we are preparing them for post-secondary

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education as well as for jobs."

For example, as home economics instructor Nancy Barrett teaches students about the foods of different cultures, she gets into geography, language arts and visual arts, as well as health and nutrition. In the cooking itself, students learn measurement and science, including the chemistry of food actions (such as leavening), the physics of heating and cooling, and the growth and inhibition of microorganisms in food and on surfaces.

A gourmet chef, Barrett regards knowledge of cuisines as comparable to knowledge of art, music or literature. It is part of being an educated person. Barrett's students have learned to prepare cuisines of China, Japan, Italy and the Caribbean.

As Lucy Flower's vocational teachers increasingly incorporate academics into their courses, academic teachers are using more hands-on projects.

In Don Galster's social studies class, the topic is "The History of TV and Racism." The assignment for the week is to design a TV show. By week's end, all students have submitted proposals. "There were a lot of plots for family shows dealing with black families in black neighborhoods, black families in white neighborhoods, racially mixed families with adopted kids," reports Galster. "One student wrote a show about the world after World War III. In it there are only two people left on earth—one black, one white, and both very racist. Other students designed talk shows about issues of race in America, and one investigated racism in prison life for a documentary."

Project-centered learning is very much a part of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Theodore Sizer, a Brown University professor who launched the Coalition, "basically gives us the leeway as teachers to offer students a means of learning what they wouldn't otherwise want to learn, by basing everything on projects," Galster notes. "You offer them a chance to choose their own topics. They get more control of their learning."

Galster says he wants to spare his students the kind of high school experience he had in small-town Wisconsin. "We were strictly: Chapter 1, test, Chapter 2, test. I don't remember any of it. My worst area, oddly enough, was social studies. My teachers all three years were varsity or junior varsity coaches, and since I was on their teams, they gave me easy A's and B's, but I don't remember a thing. I tell my students I don't want them to go through what I had to go through when I got to college."

Instead of relying on a textbook, Galster and his students choose five topics for the year. In 1992-93, a presidential election year, the first topic was elections. "We held mock elections schoolwide, with serious debates."

Galster is particularly proud that a letter to the presidential candidates, written as a class project, was featured in *Time* magazine (Nov. 9, 1992 issue), along with a picture of the students. "The subject was their [candidates'] responsibility to deal with the urban crisis. It was tremendously thrilling to my students to have our work published."

In addition to elections, Galster's class also had units on law, race and racism, and geography—"that's when we painted the giant world mural in my classroom." It completed the year with a unit on women's history; each student had to write a research paper on a significant woman in history.

"This unit emphasizes learning the research skills to write a paper—note-taking, outlining, etc.—from scratch," Galster says.

At year's end, he grades his students on the basis of work samples collected throughout the year; it's called portfolio assessment.

Principal Williams says most Flower teachers have accepted the new philosophy of teaching and learning. Five or six teachers have left the school—"there was just too much change." And some others still give true-or-false tests and aren't creative, Williams acknowledges. But she says that part of her role as educational leader is to get these teachers out of their "valley of comfort," daring them to team up and try something new.

Organizationally, Flower's enterprises function much like schools within the school. When students sign up for a career track, they join a group of 140 to 200 students who will work with the same set of teachers for four years. The hope is that stable bonds among peers and between students and faculty will reduce the likelihood of dropping out.

Also, teams of teachers, who got together to write the curriculum, are "adopting" about 10 students each. "We'll be responsible for them," says Don Galster, adding, "This will ease up the counseling load."

Lucy Flower already has made progress on reducing dropouts. Of the 135 freshmen who enrolled in 1990, 130 were still enrolled in June 1993, for a dropout rate of less than 4 percent. Of the 272 freshmen who enrolled in 1991, 267 were still enrolled two years later, for a dropout rate of less than 2 percent. The next group of freshmen wasn't as stable. Of the 180 who entered Flower in 1992, about 30, or 16.6 percent, left the school before June of 1993. But they weren't all dropouts, says Program Coordinator Bettie Stewart. Some transferred because they were not interested in the planned vocational offerings, some moved, and others died, she reports. Even so, Flower compares favorably to other Chicago high schools, where the dropout rate typically exceeds 40 percent.

However, one expert on dropout prevention believes that the curriculum itself is key. "The students are involved in *real* work, doing something for themselves and their communities," says Sheila Radford-Hill of Chicago Cities In Schools. "This is the biggest single reason that, we hope, they will remain in school."

Not content with the already impressive results of Flower's venture program, Williams and the local school council are planning to expand. One dream is to start a child-care venture, which might even provide temporary shelter for homeless families from the neighborhood. With the aid of Habitat for Humanity, a housing organization, Flower has acquired a vacant two-flat apartment a block from the school. Habitat also is helping Flower In Action students rehab the building, work that will give them credit toward graduation.

Nancy Barrett, the home economics teacher, dreams of negotiating a contract with the Chicago Park District to enable Lucy Flower students to operate the food concession at Garfield Park Conservatory, taking care of everything from snack sales to weddings and other special events. Principal Williams goes further still: "We ought to be running our own cafeteria for the staff and students. We could be providing daily training, job experience and employment to our own students."

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ALFRED NOBEL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Hub of a Community Renaissance

Address: 4127 West Hirsch (West Humboldt)
Student Body: 990. 80% Hispanic, 20% black.
Grades K-8.

Notable restructuring initiatives:

- Parent instructional assistance throughout school
- Curriculum rich with performing and visual arts
- Active participation in community-based school cluster for sharing resources and staff development
- Close school/community collaboration

Esperanza Rueda works in Nobel School classrooms every day, putting in 900 hours as an instructional aide during a typical school year. Her total compensation: $500.

"She understands it's only a token of our appreciation," says Principal Mirna Diaz Ortiz. "I couldn't possibly afford to pay all the people who give us their time. I have 40 volunteers a week in the building." The $500 stipend may be only a token payment—certainly nothing approaching an hourly wage—but it lends dignity and validity to the instructional role of a parent in the classroom.

Rueda, who does not speak English, is an instructional aide in the bilingual second-grade classroom. Hour after hour, she listens to children read in Spanish. Working with small groups, Mrs. Rueda is a patient listener and a gentle corrector. Children respond to her attention.

"When I first came to Nobel [in 1988], nobody wanted parents in their classrooms," Ortiz notes. "It took a few months for teachers to realize that these parents wanted to be of real help, and that they had skills we needed. Now, I have teachers calling down to the office to ask, 'Have you heard of any parents looking for a room to work in?' "

Parent involvement produces benefits outside the classroom as well. The school has purchased sewing machines for use by parents and students. The yield is curtains for the classrooms, banners for the auditorium and use of the machines for personal needs. Every Wednesday night is Family Social Center evening, where parents and children can work on projects together or just socialize.

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Parents are using the school as the hub of a strategy to clean out the drug dens in their densely populated neighborhood.

On a miserably cold night in December of 1992, more than 100 Nobel parents gathered in the school auditorium, along with representatives of Citibank and Habitat for Humanity, a housing organization. Citibank owned the three vacant apartment buildings directly across from Nobel, infamous as "shooting galleries" and gang hangouts. "You wouldn't believe the horrible crimes that have gone on in those buildings right across the street from the school—several murders, rapes, drug sales day and night, in plain view of the children," says Ortiz. "The school even had to call the FBI to get help in breaking up the drug operations."

The combined efforts of Nobel's parents and their allied community organizations bore fruit. Citibank agreed to sell the three buildings to Habitat for Humanity, rather than to commercial developers, even though it meant substantially less profit for the bank. The buildings are being rehabbed by community members and will be sold as condominium units. Neighborhood residents and Nobel families will receive first pick for purchase of the apartments.

The initiative for this novel project came from the Nobel Local School Council and a neighborhood organization, Nobel Neighbors. In this first acquisition, a total of 22 new housing units will be created for low-income families.

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Nobel School is a huge brown structure; the front door is embellished by a bright contemporary mosaic designed by Nobel children in an Urban Gateways arts program. "We're a prairie-style building, and we've tried to make the most of that," says Ortiz. "But I wish I had pictures of the condition this place was in when I arrived here in 1988." That was the year the physical rehab of the building began, and with it a major rise in staff and parent morale.

The school became a comfortable and beautiful place, instead of a hideous and dangerous one. The hallways fairly vibrate with colorful works by students, mounted alongside classical and contemporary reproductions. Art includes mosaics, paintings and line drawings by students, murals—many with Latin American motifs—outside every classroom, designed and executed by students. "The engineer had a fit about that," says Ortiz, "I told him to get used to it."

Masks and fantasy sculptures pop up around every corner. A display of children's drawings of Malcolm X is a lesson on use of complementary colors. Deon Duncan, the full-time art teacher, is a painter and graduate of the School of the Art Institute. Impressed by her dynamism during a a visiting Artist-In-Residence program at Nobel, the school offered her a job. Duncan turned down an offer from an elite private school to teach at Nobel.

◆

The school population is 990 students, about again as many live inside the attendance area but are bused out to 65 other elementary schools. This means Ortiz must provide early-morning supervision for nearly 1,000 students who don't attend her school, but who get picked up in front of Nobel beginning at 7 a.m. Her own staff comes in early to provide supervision. "If anything happened to one of these kids I couldn't live with it."

Class sizes at Nobel are large; for example, there are 40 eighth-graders in one room. But teachers, particularly in the lower grades, work with children in small groups, so the crowding is not so obvious. Even the huge basement lunchroom is peaceful, while conversation and laughter ripple about. Down the hall, Latin rhythms drift out of the music room, where children are trying out "salsa" percussion instruments—marimbas, congas, a cowbell.

The school's atmosphere is relaxed, informal and warm. Parents are greeted in both Spanish and English by the bilingual staff in the main office. The office is high-ceilinged, airy, with bright pink walls and vertical blinds that artfully conceal the chain link security fence covering the windows. Someone has left a sign on the staff bulletin board:

"In a completely rational society, the best of us would aspire to be teachers, and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the best responsibility anyone could have—Lee Iacocca."

◆

To provide a wider web of support for its students, Nobel has joined the Orr School Network, a cluster of elementary schools that

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feed into Rezin Orr Community Academy High School. The cluster principals share resources and lobby on behalf of their schools; their local school councils consult on matters of mutual benefit.

Staff development is offered to Orr Network schools in such fields as hands-on science and computer technology for classroom use. Workshops are conducted by the Golden Apple Foundation and the DePaul University Center for Urban Education, as well as by the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science. The Orr collaboration has received a new grant from the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, which will expand the schools' offerings in the visual and performing arts for children and parents alike.

The stimulating atmosphere of change at the school has prompted most of Nobel's staff to continue their own educations. About 90 percent of adult staff, including teacher aides, are taking at least one class in a degree or certificate program, and a sizeable contingent of Nobel parents are studying for the GED examination in classes at the Chicago Commons Association.

◆

"When I arrived here, Nobel was in the bottom 100 schools in the system," says Ortiz. But in the first years of school reform, Nobel's scholastic achievement improved steadily. Because of its low achievement results and high number of low-income children, the school received federal (ESEA) assistance of about $600,000 a year. This enabled administrators to hire extra teachers to reduce class size and teachers' aides to provide extra assistance. A computerized reading skills laboratory was purchased. The ESEA dollars permitted Nobel to offer full-day kindergarten for about 180 children. Last year, 18 of the 29 pupils were reading at grade level when they entered first grade.

The school soon climbed out of the bottom 100, but it also paid a price. In 1992, Nobel's ESEA allocation was slashed by nearly $300,000, costing Nobel four teachers and five teachers' aides. Although the school was accepted in the sought-after Reading Recovery program, the ESEA cuts forced Nobel to decline the program last year. Two full-day kindergarten classrooms also had to be discontinued. In 1993, Nobel took an additional ESEA cut of nearly $40,000. "If we had kept our test scores down, we could have held on to all those dollars," observes Ortiz. "This is the reward for our success."

The principal has developed a computerized system of tracking academic growth—room by room, year by year—using test scores. Her knowledge of her staff and the groups of children enables her to make a useful analysis of test results, and to discuss them with her faculty and the LSC.

◆

Ortiz became principal at Nobel just before reform arrived. The building, she recalls, was "filthy." Furniture was bolted to the floor. The former engineer reported Ortiz to the Fire Department for hanging art work on the walls (a fire hazard!). The police were constantly being summoned because of criminals loitering around the periphery of the school, and sometimes even running into the school to hide.

Nobel became the first school in Chicago to post "Safe School Zone" signs. A parent patrol boasting dozens of members turned out every morning sporting neon orange armbands, directing traffic, shepherding children and keeping an eye out for gang activity. Ortiz has been recognized by the National Crime Prevention Council for her leadership on this issue.

Looking back on her years of site-based management and reform at Nobel, Ortiz says she is proudest of the growth in student self-esteem. "There's been a real change in attitudes, the creation of a real family atmosphere. We actually have a lot of kids who don't want to go home at the end of the day. This is a real working school."

BENJAMIN O. DAVIS DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER

Going the Extra Mile

Address: 9101 S. Jeffery (South Shore)
Student Body: 104 in pre-K through developmental kindergarten.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Use of classroom technology with severely disabled children
- Creation of a developmental kindergarten to ease transition

A curly-haired, 5-year-old named Rico bends over an Apple computer keyboard, pounding away. Because of cerebral palsy, he's in a wheelchair, and he has difficulty controlling his hand movements. But the computer has a special screen that enables him to touch images to make his selections. His teacher, Jim O'Connor, taps Rico's forehead: "It's all up here," he says warmly. "This is a very smart boy." Rico is all smiles at this. "He'd work on the computer all day long if he could," the teacher adds.

Another child uses a mouth-held wand to tap the screen. He's filling out a worksheet on the concepts of "big" and "little," labeling the images of familiar objects as they appear on the screen. Like Stephen Hawking, the disabled theoretical physicist who authored *A Brief History of Time*, these children may not be able to write with a pencil. But through the use of technology, they, like Hawking, can express themselves.

For some Davis Developmental students, the computer is likely to be their primary means of communication throughout life. O'Connor, whose salary is paid from the school's small state Chapter 1 allotment, uses special "Hyperstudio" software to create projects that use the touch-window screen. In 1990, Davis Developmental received an Ameritech-Illinois Bell Local School Council Improvement Award. Its council used the $10,000 prize to purchase computers, skill-building software, peripherals and accessories, and "talk-back" components with special screens for adaptive use.

Principal Jim Corcoran (now retired—Ed.) is worried that the computer room is too chilly today. Two decades ago, when the building housed a Jewish community center, it was a men's locker room. And although the Board of Education has owned the building since the early 1970s, the room has never been properly rehabbed. Many of the children who work here have neurological disorders that make them especially vulnerable to respiratory infections. They already have trouble keeping airways clear; catching cold can be particularly bad news for them.

The hallways at Davis are lined with special equipment—feeding chairs, portable commodes, wheelchairs in a variety of sizes, a gurney. There are children with spina bifida in varying degrees—some seated in chairs, some able only to scoot about on a "sled," a four-wheel platform on which the child lies on his stomach. There are children with autism, Down's syndrome and various degrees of cerebral palsy. Some children have breathing and feeding tubes in place, some need oxygen, some require frequent medication.

"Some of these children really need a level of care beyond what

we can give," says Corcoran. "This is partly because of the philosophy of Dr. [Thomas] Hehir [former associate superintendent for special education]. He believed that we were 'tuitioning out' too many disabled children from the system into private institutions. As a result, our population at Davis Developmental has become more profoundly handicapped than before reform."

Although the prevailing trend is to integrate these children into neighborhood schools, it is unlikely that a regular preschool could manage some of the medical and psychological problems encountered at Davis, which has a full-time nurse and occupational therapist.

But for those children who can make the transition, Davis has launched an intensified developmental program to get 5-year-olds ready for regular kindergarten. "The mission of this school," Corcoran says, "is readiness for kindergarten." Daily physical therapy and adaptive gym activities help the children gain mastery of large muscle groups. Toilet training, imperative for the transition, is emphasized. Extra hands are needed to maintain cleanliness, and extra staff is needed to work with children individually and in groups.

Davis Developmental's circular gym is the hub of the school. Its barrel-stave ceiling arches over a constant whirl of activity. Gym is clearly a favorite class. Teachers work in teams to give each child a variety of sensory experiences—things as simple as the sensation of being upside down, which comes easily to non-disabled children. Learning to climb stairs or slide or swing are major hurdles here. Carefully staged circle games promote coordination and social skills.

Davis Developmental serves the huge area from 70000 south to the southern city limits, from the lakefront west to Beverly and Mount Greenwood. "Even with reform," Corcoran admits, "I often feel like we're still very much at the mercy of downtown, like our needs, given the demands of this special population, are not being addressed."

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Parent involvement has been a somewhat bumpy road at Davis. Several parents have been longtime leaders in the school community and serve on the local school council. "But the difficulty for parents and foster parents of these particular children is that there is so much demand on their time as care-givers," Corcoran says. "They don't all have sufficient time to be policy makers as well."

NATHAN DAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Getting in Shape for Learning

Address: 3014 West 39th Place (Brighton Park)
Student body: 1,000. 80% Hispanic, 20% white.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Self-directed health and fitness curriculum
- Weekly academic competitions as a new form of assessment
- "Master Teacher" takes lead in schoolwide curricular integration effort
- Parents in multiple roles throughout the school

From the outside, Davis Elementary looks like one of the aging brick factory buildings that surround it. Built when the neighborhood was home to Polish and Lithuanian stockyard workers, brewers and metal workers, Davis was a factory school in the truest sense. It assimilated the immigrants' children, and taught the basic skills and attitudes needed for industrial life.

A burgeoning population of immigrants still flows into the area south of Pilsen, most of them from Mexico and Central America. Davis could have clung to its original mission, kept the desks bolted to the floor and run the new immigrants' children through an exercise in assimilation and limited horizons. Instead, Davis is working to create an atmosphere of beauty, tranquility, safety and learning within the shell of an old building.

Master Teacher Pat Collins has taught three generations at Davis; among her current students are the grandchildren of those she taught in the early 1950s. Facing retirement just as school reform arrived in 1989, Collins received an offer she couldn't refuse. Principal David Gardner, unwilling to see Collins' decades of experience and her high-energy personality depart, asked the local school council to create a "curriculum coordinator" position for Collins. The new job frees her from classroom duty to "do what I've dreamed of doing—trying out all the ideas I've had over the years."

Collins, an inventive and affectionate teacher, has the job of "bringing out the best" in the rest of the Davis staff, soliciting ideas and complaints about curriculum and helping redirect and update the entire school program.

With prompting from Gardner, the staff put together a proposal that won a place for the school in the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center program. Collins, Gardner and resource teacher Ken Staral work on reform issues with Carlene Lutz of the Quest Center. A veteran teacher and Southwest Sider, Lutz knows the community and the teachers well. Her role, says Lutz, is to help the staff clarify restructuring goals, keep them informed about staff development opportunities and put them in contact with teachers from other Quest schools wrestling with similar issues. In a school where the student transfer rate exceeds 30 percent annually, stability and continuity in the classroom are high-priority issues.

The "Davis Derby," a weekly academic bowl competition, is one way the school tries to emphasize both team cooperation and personal excellence. At one typical Derby Day in the auditorium, an emcee fired off questions compiled from a week's worth of lesson plans submitted to Collins by the teachers—spelling words, perhaps, or geography. Every child gets a turn representing his or her class, and winning classrooms display a coveted banner over the door for a week. "This is preparation for academic competitions," explains principal Gardner. "We intend to be the leading school in District 5. Our kids know we need to practice in order to compete."

But to compete effectively requires good health, and health is a major concern at Davis. "There are many kids who wouldn't get anything to eat in the morning if they didn't have breakfast here," says Gardner.

Indeed, the role of the school as a center for health and safety is expanding, with nutrition assuming greater prominence in the curriculum. "We see among our students a lot of the obesity that comes with poverty," says Patricia Collins. "Nutrition is a big issue both in the classroom and in the lunchroom. We even give awards to kids for trying new vegetables."

The school's health program got a shot in the arm when Davis was "adopted" by the American Medical Association. The affinity was natural: Members of the school community learned that the school's namesake, Dr. Nathan Davis, came to Chicago in 1849 to organize health clinics for the city's poor. The AMA's national headquarters, located in Chicago, was approached, and a partnership blossomed.

The AMA has launched a summer immunization program to make sure all Davis students are in compliance with state law before the beginning of the school year, and has carried out extensive lead-poisoning detection. Several previously undetected medical problems among students were turned up by the AMA's volunteer health screening team. A stairmaster machine was the AMA's gift for the school's new fitness center, an unusual feature for an elementary school. Members of the staff of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* are working with Davis students to produce the school's

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yearbook. And a donation of 1,200 T-shirts and other awards has boosted school spirit.

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Take a walk around Davis School any morning and you will be noticed by a member of the active Parent Patrol. Equipped with walkie-talkies, the parents are on the lookout for signs of gang activity. They have good reason for vigilance. Within a year, two youths were shot on the Davis block. Although neither incident occurred during school hours or involved Davis children, the parents cite safety and security as a top concern.

Inside the building, 20 to 30 parents work as volunteers or engage in their own study activities each day. Parent training classes offered by the Family Study Institute drew about 100 parents in 1992-93. And several Davis parents have returned to school themselves. Angela Galindo is a school aide with three children at Davis and another at Kelly High School. Antonia Diaz is also a mother of Davis children and a member of the school's bilingual council. After eight years of volunteer work at Davis, both mothers enrolled in a teacher-training program at National-Louis University. "It's really hard to go back to school with four kids at home," says Galindo, "but we have to do it."

Working together, parents completely rehabbed the school lunchrooms. "It's a basement, and it was really not pretty. Now they're the prettiest rooms in the school," says Collins, "They have a restaurant feel, and the children put on their restaurant manners." Parents in the sewing class made matching table linens, aprons and drapes for each room, and children's artwork adds verve to the table settings. Clean, attractive, and "owned" by the students, the lunchrooms themselves enhance the school's role as a provider of nutrition.

◆

Physical education teacher Bob Swiech has taken the lead in establishing a physical fitness center in addition to the school's regular gym. The LSC has purchased much of the fitness equipment, which now includes a universal machine for weight training, a treadmill, stairmaster for cardiovascular conditioning, a small trampoline and other gear. "Students are allowed to train on their own, but with partners," Swiech explains.

After passing a test on responsible use of the equipment, students are expected to sign in and out of the fitness center and to clean up after themselves. During the school day, students can use the fitness equipment for 20 minutes either before or after school. During the summer, they can use the fitness center up to four times a week for 90-minute workouts.

Swiech has assisted overweight students in developing training programs while simultaneously improving their diets. "Some of the most troubled kids have found this to be a great help," says Collins of the fitness program. In addition, the Davis playground remains open to students until 9 nightly, with supervised sports activities.

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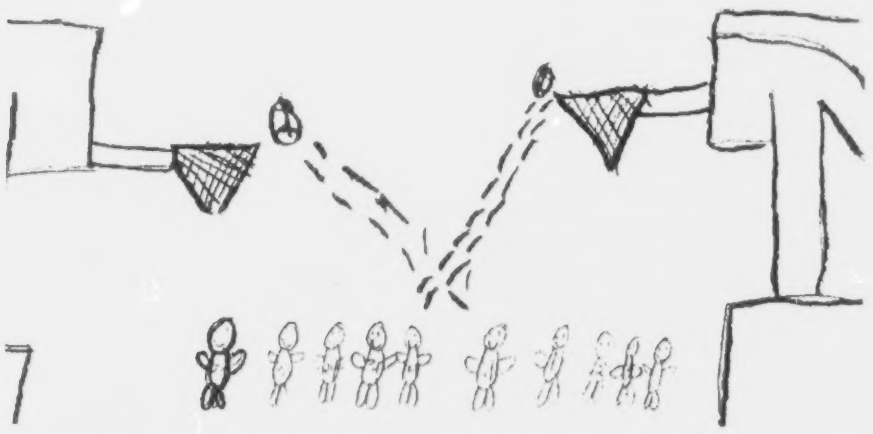
Families in crisis receive help through Davis. The LSC appropriates funding for the services of a counseling agency that provides family social work to the school community. The agency supplements the work of school counselor Miriam Rubenstein, who provides group and individual guidance. "We have a 30 percent annual turnover of our student body at Davis," Rubenstein says. "A lot of these children's lives are in turmoil. They need more help than we can give them. We barely have a chance to get to know them before they move on."



Rubenstein points out that the guidance department at Pershing Road is down to one person. Thus it has become vital to her to meet regularly with other school counselors in Subdistrict 5. "We network and support each other, we share information about programs, resources in the community," Rubenstein says. "It's as important for us as it is for teachers to have this kind of collegial relationship."

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Kathy Kuranda, a parent member of the Davis Local School Council, is optimistic about the future of the school. "When I first became involved at this school, my big issue was school security. It was after the Laurie Dann incident [where a woman opened fire in a Winnetka school], and I discovered that any- -ly could just walk freely into the building. We organized around safety, and a lot of parents became involved.

"Look what we've been able to do so far," she continues. "We have a great principal, we've bought computers and all kinds of improvements for the environment. The school is clean inside, and we've got a new lunchroom. Teachers got the Quest grant to study restructuring, they hired Mrs. Collins, and they're doing a lot of programs that are new. I feel very comfortable that this school will be the leader in District 5. The problems we have at Davis are problems the whole city has, not just us. But the will is here to overcome our problems."

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER HIGH SCHOOL

Like Describing a Color You've Never Seen

Address: 6520 S. Wood Street (West Englewood)
Student Body: 1,450. 100% black.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Schools-within-the-school
- Teachers designing a new curriculum

"Kids must be known and known well by the educators in the school in order to get a crackling good education—everything else flows from this, the metaphorical heart of good schooling. The reasoning is straightforward. If we don't know our students well enough to understand how their minds work, we can't teach them well."

—Bethany Rogers,
Coalition of Essential Schools,
"Small Is Beautiful," 1992

It's 2:15 p.m. at the only open exit from Harper High School. Rain pouring down, kids pouring out. Inside the foyer, three uniformed Chicago police officers and a cohort of Board of Education security guards are getting a metal detector ready for the next morning. Take cover, it's a stampede, the adults half-joke, as hundreds of children clog the hallway. Atop the grey interior walls, a flashy mural of the Cardinal, the Harper mascot, is the only decoration.

In some Chicago schools, a visitor can just wander in. At Harper, you sign in at a desk monitored by a police officer, and, if asked, you provide identification and wear a visitor's badge while in the building. The tight security was instituted after a student was stabbed to death in a geometry class in October 1989. That was a few months after Barbara Pulliam had become principal. The incident, which occurred the day before the first LSC elections, became a watershed for the school.

"Something like 80 students walked out of the building to protest 'our school being run like a jail' after I put new security measures in place," Pulliam recalls.

Pulliam spoke in the school office, immaculate and spacious, and dominated by photos: Malcolm X front and center, former mayors Eugene Sawyer and Harold Washington, a montage of snapshots of a recent visit to the school by the Rev. Jesse Jackson. The sign out front greets visitors on behalf of Sara Lee Corporation, a regular donor and supporter of Harper. Sweet gospel music drifts down the halls; somewhere nearby a choir is practicing.

Pulliam has been an elementary and high school teacher and has taught at the university level, but says that being principal at Harper is "the hardest job I've ever had." Easily the tallest woman in the building, Pulliam is a commanding yet warm presence. She arrives at work toting a red backpack.

"I used to dream of seeing two things happen in this school: Kids with books, reading, walking around and sitting together talking about their assignments, their schoolwork.

"Second, I dreamed of seeing teachers getting together to talk strategies, to talk about things that work, about articles they had read.

"Those are my personal indicators of school change, and they're happening now at Harper."

Indeed, a group of teachers and staff will meet today after classes to work on their plans for a small school within Harper, called COMETS, enrolling 150 students and specializing in communications.

Today's meeting will address the official mission statement of COMETS, and assorted problems: how to attract and enroll students, how to raise money for broadcasting equipment, what classroom space COMETS will occupy.

English teacher Kris Sieloff, a member of the core planning group, went back to school herself to get a master's degree, because "I didn't know what I was doing." Now she has become an active member of the Teachers Task Force, a citywide association active in restructuring schools. Teachers Task Force facilitators have been working with Harper teachers to figure out a teacher-generated school within the school. Like Sieloff, most of the teachers in the planning team are first-year staff members.

The meeting, which includes Teachers Task Force members from Wendell Phillips High School and staff of the Small Schools Workshop, based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, settles down to business in the fourth-floor art studio. Copies of the latest draft of the "COMETS Charter" are distributed. The charter stresses that the school will implement an integrated curriculum of its own design, with the theme of communication principles and media technology. It emphasizes content experience and assessment. And it promises to deliver "an innovative block schedule that provides at least 300 minutes of instruction [daily], common planning time for teachers, and a tutorial period for individualized instruction. . ."

Mary Randle of Harper's management team reports that 65 students have signed up for COMETS. The planners are aiming for a total of 150, with at least 100 in year one. Core subjects will include English, math, integrated science, social studies and computer programming with a focus on the media arts. Also being planned is a "metacurriculum" emphasizing student self-governance, a culture and practice of democracy, group decision making, goal setting and mutual assistance.

Among the issues raised today:

- ❑ What happens first, LSC approval or principal approval, to start the school and get it a share of the budget?
- ❑ Who will have the authority to hire and fire teachers for this program? The planners discuss negotiating a personnel policy with the principal.
- ❑ Will COMETS subscribe to Harper's discipline policy, apparel code, etc., or design its own? Can the school-within-the-school expel students? Who decides?
- ❑ What kind of grading system; what kind of assessment system?
- ❑ Will COMETS have adequate support staff to do truancy calls, clerical work?

"Where," one teacher asks, "can we have a daily meeting of the whole school-within-a-school—all 150 students plus the whole teacher team? We need to get together each morning."

The teachers continue to list their concerns, trying to anticipate possible areas where conflict might arise. They still have six months to get these issues resolved, and, as they keep reminding each other, "Nothing is written in stone." What doesn't work will have to be changed. Michelle Fine of the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative has described the process of setting up teacher-led schools-within-schools as "describing a color you've never seen." The teachers may know in general what they'd like, but they've never had the opportunity to experience personally the kinds of schools they are inventing.

As the afternoon darkened into evening, a final theme at this meeting was the idea of conducting a "learning styles inventory" of the incoming COMETS students. The possibility was raised of taking the inventory at the beginning of the year, with an eye to using it in planning, scheduling and curriculum. "In a learner-centered classroom," Fran Williams of the Task Force explains, "teachers may change activities (vary teaching modes) every 15 minutes to address different learning styles."

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These teachers' innovations and planning enjoy the active support and goodwill of principal Pulliam, who recalls her first months at Harper: "I met the faculty of 86 and told them, 'I refuse to run this school alone. I can't do it.' We had 86 individual islands, not a real staff."

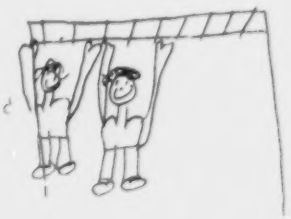
Now, after three years as principal, she says, "Teachers are showing pride in the profession of teaching." The Harper staff has a higher-than-average median age, with a good many teachers close to retirement. "We have a group of experienced, mature teachers along with brand-new teachers who just bounced out of college."

Has she had to get rid of any teachers? "I consider the [dismissal] process a real time-waster," she replies. "If I think someone is bad, incompetent, not doing their job, then one day you'll look up and they'll be gone. I've let people know that either they go on their own or we'll do it the hard way. Most people choose to go the easy way."

Pulliam introduced peer observation and intervention to improve teacher performance. "I have one standard response when a teacher comes to me about another teacher," Pulliam says. "I ask them, 'Have you told her?' It's not easy for a teacher to criticize a colleague. But if you see your co-worker speaking abusively to a student, or coming in unprepared, it's your responsibility to this institution and to your profession. You're really doing that teacher a kindness—an act of collegiality—because once management gets involved, then that teacher is in deep trouble. If you can handle it yourself, you may save that teacher's job."

Pulliam attributes improved teacher performance to two major shifts in emphasis.

The first was teacher professionalization. Pulliam formed a tight administrative team to run interference for teachers by "catching" a lot of what's sent from the central office, reducing paperwork and increasing planning time. Also, discretionary dollars such as state Chapter I are used in part to purchase institutional memberships and subscriptions to professional organizations and publications. Thus Harper belongs to an alphabet soup of educators' associations: NASSP, NABSE, ASCD, AASA. A dozen current copies of *Teacher* magazine are circulating among the staff. Teachers are sent to special conferences and research events, after which they are expected to report to the whole staff or to their team.



Pulliam's second major change was a program called STARS—Students Technically and Academically Ready for Success—to address the academic and social needs of students in the "forgotten middle"—those who are neither failing nor identified as "gifted." It targets students Pulliam describes as "kids who are not in trouble; they are a year or so below grade level, and they come to school every day." These students are largely ignored because they are not far enough below grade level to be "at risk" and eligible for special attention and funding, nor are they above grade level and identified as "gifted and talented" and eligible for another set of special programs. Thus there is little obvious incentive for these "middle" students to work hard. They are "neither good enough nor bad enough" and, notes Pulliam, their academic careers could go either up or down.

Pulliam was approached by a veteran business teacher, Irma West, who proposed a special program for just these students. West's plan developed into the STARS program.

The idea originally was spelled out in a proposal to the R.J. Reynolds Nabisco, Inc. school design competition (21st Century Schools).

After receiving two consecutive rejection letters from RJR-Nabisco with neither an explanation nor a critique of the STARS proposal, Pulliam fired off an angry letter to the corporation's chief executive officer.

A few weeks later, Pulliam received a call from a corporate executive to whom the matter had been referred. Company representatives subsequently visited the school and made a special grant to Harper's STARS program, and a relationship was established with Nabisco's South Side bakery plant.

The school also received a Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technological Education grant to fund STARS.

The program involves about 100 freshmen, organized in teams of 25 each, with names like "The Dream Team," "The Awesome Stars" and "The Mighty Homeys." STARS helps them get their bearings in high school through individual counseling, small class sizes and the use of motivational training for staff and students.

"It really bothered me," West explains, "when I would see Harper graduates, former students of mine, working on the line at McDonald's, two and three years after graduation." West blames the lack of career counseling and its separation from the curriculum. Young men and women don't know much about the world beyond their immediate neighborhood, she says, so West emphasizes the use of travel as a teaching tool. In its first year of operation, STARS students took trips to museums, Chicago's water filtration plant, O'Hare Airport and residential communities in the city and suburbs.

West wants students to have a sense of the wide range of jobs and living standards in the metropolitan area. After scanning government reports on careers of the future, the STARS program designated four career clusters in the Chicago area—transportation, manufacturing, business/marketing and office technology, and food services—as the vocational curriculum. This may expand to include health careers. Partnerships, job placements and mentors have been offered to STARS by such diverse organizations as the Marquette Bank, the Chicago Department of Human Services, the Black Data Processors Association and Nabisco. The core curriculum for STARS students includes algebra, English I, biology and urban studies.

Urban studies combine social studies and career awareness, West says. "The goal is to enable these young people to make a wise career choice about jobs in the Chicago area. They need the information as well as the skills." It's one thing for students to work in McDonald's during high school, or even right after graduation, she says. "But they need to have an idea of where they are going."

In its first year, the STARS program lost only 15 out of 100 entering students, a lower percentage than the school as a whole. At least five were students who transferred to other schools because of gang-related problems, three moved out of the area, two became pregnant, and the whereabouts of five are not known. West is optimistic that as the program adds more social services and curricular enrichment, the numbers will improve.

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Pulliam says her biggest challenge as principal was "how to make my new schools work while not neglecting the rest of the school." The appearance of favoritism toward the innovative programs could lead to resentment within the larger faculty. As principal, Pulliam had to nurture the experimental projects while keeping the improvement of the whole school on the front burner.

To the dismay of her staff, Pulliam announced at the end of the 1992-93 school year that she would be leaving Harper for an out-of-state job.

What if we do all this work and launch the program, teachers wondered, and the new principal or the new LSC doesn't like it? They needed some assurance that COMETS would at least have a chance to run a full three-year cycle of students and then be evaluated. So the team went before the Harper Local School Council and received a three-year "charter" mandating that the new principal continue to support the school-within-the-school effort.

Good news followed. By the end of the '92-'93 school year, the COMETS teachers had received a number of grants to support their efforts, including funds from the University of Illinois at Chicago's Small Schools Workshop, and from the Sara Lee Corporation. Their proposal also won them membership in the network of restructuring schools facilitated by the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center.

The COMETS school at Harper is a developing model. The teachers have a willing principal and a supportive LSC, but it is the teachers themselves who are creating a new school, based on a common approach to learning. They are not just thinking about it, they're doing it.

GEORGE HOWLAND SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

'You Had to Name Yourself What You Wanted to Become'

Address: 1616 S. Spaulding (South Lawndale)
Student Body: 550. 100% black

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Intensive fine arts instruction for all children
- High-tech classrooms with highly trained teachers
- Biweekly professional planning day for every teacher
- Monthly schoolwide Saturday family outings

It's 9 a.m. and the 100 youngest children at Howland School of the Arts have crowded into the hallway for a first-thing-in-the-morning sing-along:

Oh you can be a peaceful child,
Even a peaceful man. . .
You can be like Martin, yes you can. . .
To be Afro-American is
To stand up straight and tall,
For equal opportunity
And a better life for all. . .

After joining hands to practice "We Shall Overcome," the children are dispatched to their classrooms. They are warmed-up, cheerful and purposeful.

Art and music teachers were among the heaviest casualties in the 1979 financial collapse of the Chicago Public Schools. Layoffs wiped out fine arts programs in all but a few elementary schools.

It was not until the fall of 1989 that the Board of Education, at the urging of the Chicago Teachers Union, partially restored art and music positions, asking elementary schools to choose between hiring a half-time music or a half-time art teacher. Most schools considered this offer to be no choice at all, reminiscent of King Solomon's offer to cut the baby in half. Many schools elected to pay for the other half.

But Howland Elementary School wanted more; they refused to "choose" between art and music. During the arts-in-education famine years, Howland changed its name to Howland School for the Arts and applied to the Board of Education for Options for Knowledge (desegregation) funding to hire art educators. Changing the school name "represented the crystallization of our vision," says former principal Anita Broms. "You had to name yourself what you wanted to become. We had to keep that vision in front of us all the time."

Today, Howland School of the Arts has made a name for itself in more ways than one. Not only has it won national acclaim for its performing and visual arts programs, it is among the nation's most advanced elementary schools in the use of technology in the classroom. It's an academic springboard, sending its students on to Chicago's best high schools.

Howland is a school of striking contrasts. Set amid the harsh streets of South Lawndale, the 100-year-old building looks its age, with crumbling plaster and well-worn hardwood floors. But on the turreted roof sits an ultra-modern satellite dish, a gift of the Hughes Aircraft Corp. The dish links Howland to a curriculum delivery system and to classrooms in 31 other schools across North America.

Howland students are given three-month rotations of instrumental music, visual arts and dance during the early grades, and greater opportunities to specialize as they mature. Every child masters at least one musical instrument, learns to read musical notation along with letters and numbers, and receives extensive experience in dance forms and choreography.

Howland students learn to express themselves in many media: sculpture, pottery, printmaking, painting, photography and drawing. The school's gallery space displays works by students, parents and teachers. Student works also have been transcribed and performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as part of Howland's "Junior Composers" partnership with the CSO.

Even the physical education teacher at Howland is a dancer. "No problem," says Jim Kamys with a grin. "It's definitely physical." Kamys, a graduate of the Dance Center of Columbia College, along with dancer Alberta Leggins, provides lessons in African and other folk dance forms, classical ballet, jazz and modern dance. Several students have gone on to join professional dance companies, including the Joseph Holmes troupe.

Choreography—the designing of dances—is stressed as a multidisciplinary skill. "It's the application and realization of mathematical concepts," says primary music specialist Donna Dehnert. "How many beats to the measure of music? How many steps can you fit in that measure? Choreography is very much about equivalency—whole notes, half notes, rests—these are all part of teaching students to think symbolically. It works together very well." It works so well that Howland students have performed all over the city, at schools, malls, concerts and at the Art Institute of Chicago.

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Broms, who has been Howland's principal for 18 years, believes the school was on the upswing even before reform came in. What difference, then, has reform made for a school that already had so clear a sense of purpose?

"Reform has freed us from so many constraints," Broms explains. "In the past, they used to refer to 'creative insubordination' when a principal went ahead and bent or ignored the rules or did something outside of board policy for her school. Now we have greater flexibility."

Better yet, she says, "We have a lot more control over our dollars to fulfill our improvement goals." Without hesitation, Broms singles out the state Chapter I allocation as the biggest gain reform has brought to Howland. "We already knew what we wanted to do. This [reform] gave us more control over funding and has speeded up our ability to fulfill our plans." Broms also acknowledges the role of arts-in-education organizations, such as Urban Gateways, in helping to reconceive the school.

Howland is very much a coalition effort. Aside from the art teacher, whose salary is paid out of Options funds, the school has become a training site for intern-teachers from the School of the Art Institute and from the Dance Center of Columbia College. The hours of many fine arts professionals are donated to the school or underwritten by private philanthropy. Howland also has received a grant from the Illinois Arts Council.

Unique among Chicago elementary schools, Howland has a combined arts staff of seven teachers. It includes two dance instructors, three music teachers and two visual arts teachers, for a school of 550 children. The arts teachers play a pivotal role in integrating arts themes into the schoolwide curriculum. "What we want is to see in the regular classrooms the use of music and arts techniques," says C.C. Mitchell-Babbitt, a visual arts teacher. "This is becoming standard practice now. The teachers are seeing how it will enhance language arts, social studies, math, everything."

A key to the process is building teacher confidence. The arts "really require something other than rote learning," says Broms. "They make teachers change their approach to teaching. They have to think differently about the role of self-expression in the learning process." Howland's classroom teachers receive a lot of support from the arts department.

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Building up teacher confidence is only part of the equation, however. Teachers need time to learn new skills, to practice them and to adapt them to their classrooms. Howland teachers have had intensive training in the use of cooperative learning techniques. Howland also has added a large supply of computers and other high-tech classroom tools over the past three years, and teachers have needed extra time to learn how to make full use of the equipment. To create blocks of staff development time, the school employs a "release team," consisting of two retired teachers who rotate into classes so that every 10th day, each regular teacher receives a planning day. On these days, teachers can work on their classroom plans or they can observe classrooms at other schools. They might have a tutorial session in the use of computer software or art media. They might visit a museum or library in search of materials for their program. Mostly, says Broms, the teachers work in the school, planning for the next 10-day cycle.

One benefit of the release team, teachers report, is that during the regular workdays, they have more energy and time to concentrate on their students. Materials and equipment are already in order, paperwork is up to date, and teachers are able to give more uninterrupted time to individual counseling and conversation with children.

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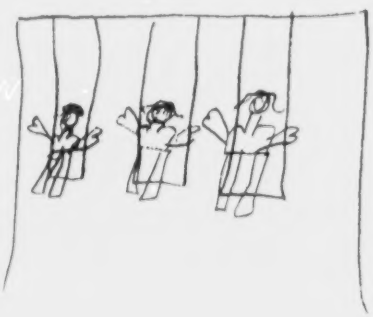
Howland has nearly achieved a goal set by its local school council in the first school improvement plan, adopted in 1990: to equip the entire school with five IBM work stations per classroom, and to network the entire building. They have equipped nearly every classroom. Because the existing electrical wiring was old, major electrical work had to be done. In the midst of this work, Howland won a million-dollar "Galaxy School" award from Hughes Aircraft. The program provides free delivery via a Hughes satellite of a curriculum program in math, science and language arts, along with staff training, to 32 schools in 32 states. Each of the schools received a satellite dish, along with 27-inch TV sets, VCRs, fax machines and direct phone lines for every classroom. Howland students can now talk directly with students in the 31 other schools.



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In Kathy Coval's fourth-grade classroom, children are working on five projects at once, rotating from one activity station to the next in groups of four or five. Some are writing stories about themselves, others are preparing classroom decorations, another group is writing letters that will be faxed to pen pals on the Galaxy network.

Coval came to Howland after teaching in a parish school that was slated for closing by the Chicago Archdiocese. She was attracted to Howland by the idea of "integrating everything," she says. "They were offering seminars in cooperative learning. It just seemed like it would be easier to implement my ideas about teaching here."

The Galaxy program provides a 15-minute, commercial-free television show once a week. Coval can decide if her class will view it. She can tape it and run it whenever it fits her schedule—or ignore it. With each show, teachers receive a packet of some 40 suggestions for related classroom activities, and a newsletter with teacher input on the Galaxy offerings.

Coval uses Galaxy programs to stimulate student writing. "What Galaxy gives my class above all is a lot of opportunity for authentic writing. They have a problem-solving show called 'House' on which a hypothetical problem is described. Kids write letters with their suggestions on how to solve it, and the best letters get shown and read on the air. Two letters from our class have been shown on TV since January. You can imagine how exciting it is, when they say, 'Here's a letter from Derrick Scott at Howland School in Chicago...'

"They had a letter recently from a girl saying everyone had forgotten her birthday and she was considering running away from home. How would you handle it? What advice would you give this girl? The kids made charts listing her options and weighing the pros and cons of each solution.

"Then after they reasoned out their solutions, they went through the process of writing and rewriting drafts, restructuring sentences and eventually, faxing their letters. And when they broadcast the replies, there was more than one viewpoint represented—not just one 'right' answer."

Children in Coval's class keep track of their work in portfolios, and they can now look back and laugh at their "old" handwriting, their errors in grammar or spelling. "Even the children can recognize their own growth," Coval says, "but I'm not nagging them. They love writing to a real audience."

Lorraine Taylor, a tall and commanding figure in her eighth-grade classroom, is known for her use of structured cooperative learning groups. This morning the subject is drugs. "They don't all have the same effect on the human body," says Taylor, introducing the subject for discussion.

After reading together about the effects of alcohol and other drugs, students formed small groups and selected roles for themselves—Readers, Assemblers, Clarifiers, Encouragers. Taylor doesn't expect a silent classroom, but she expects students to exercise self-control in conversation. "You need to use your six-inch voices," she reminds them, "Project to your team only." There's one other rule: "Don't put anybody down for any answer they might give."

The buzz of voices rises in the room as students bend together over charts, matching the street names and scientific names of drugs, along with their effects on the brain and other organs. Taylor observes: "We can't have a silent classroom and do cooperative work. So a teacher couldn't do this without a principal's support."

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In Howland's parent room—stocked with fresh coffee, parenting magazines, home-study literature and craft materials—several mothers wait to take up their outdoor posts at dismissal time.

"Parents surround this school in the mornings, and we see to it that each child gets home safely in the afternoon," says LSC member Janice Lellen.

LSC Chair Ruby Fulton, a mother of six, says, "We'll go and pick up the tardy children in the mornings, too. We ring doorbells and tell them to get on out of bed, and we wait for them."

Some of Fulton's older children went on to Curie High School, which has a strong fine arts program. LSC Vice Chair Alonzetta Abraham sent older children to Collins, where one son excelled as an artist, selling several paintings. Howland parents see the arts as a powerful motivator for their children. For Christmas, parent volunteers produced their own full-scale, costume production of the musical, "The Wiz," to the delight of the students and staff.

Among the most active volunteers are Howland graduates, some of whom recall that Broms was the principal when they were children. Community representatives on the local school council included a parent and grandparent of Howland graduates.

For adult learners, the school offers exercise, dance, G.E.D., literacy and sewing classes during school hours. Once a month, on a Saturday, Howland families pile into a school bus and head for a museum, sports or cultural event. They've been to the Chicago Sinfonietta, Shedd Aquarium, films and on picnics. A busload of Howland students travels regularly to the suburban corporate headquarters of Scott-Foresman & Co., the publisher, for a monthly dinner and program. Scott-Foresman provides books and tutorial help for the students and has been a stable "adoption" partner to the school for a decade.

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"We're not out of the woods yet," says Broms of the school's progress. "We're still not where we want to be academically. We're still laying the foundations. We're very focused on where we want this school to go. We were already on the right track, and reform has made us more effective."

GEORGE ROGERS CLARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Just a Little Country Schoolhouse

Address: 1045 S. Monitor ("The Island")
Student Body: 170. 40% white, 40% Hispanic, 19% black, 1% Asian. Grades K-8.

Notable Restructuring Initiatives:

- Elective humanities curriculum for all students
- A successful campaign to prevent school closing
- Multi-grade classrooms at all levels

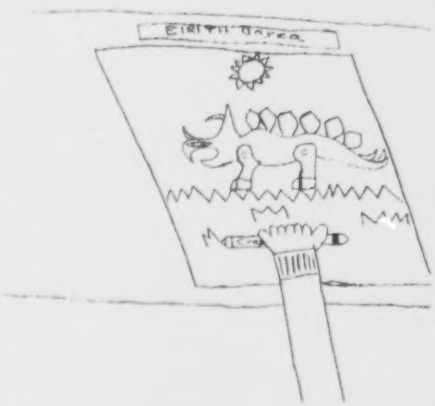
"Let me show you our library and our counseling office," says Counselor Marcia Stoczynski, opening the door of a shelf-lined broom closet. She's not kidding. The library books stored inside are circulated each morning on a rolling cart as Stoczynski visits the classrooms. Afternoons, she becomes the guidance counselor.

"Here's our gym," she jokes, noting a rousing—if cramped—game of volleyball under way in the hall. "And here's one of our L.D. [learning disabilities] classrooms," she says, indicating a table in another stretch of hallway.

With 170 students, six classrooms and an office, George Rogers Clark Elementary is Chicago's smallest neighborhood school. Clark looks more like a Park District field house than a school. "We're just a little country school," says Principal Bruce Brown.

With no space for a private office, Brown's desk sits next to the clerk's. The radiator at his elbow serves as a bookshelf. The "lunchroom" consists of three oilcloth-covered tables in the corridor, equipped with three orange plastic coolers. Lunches are picked up here and eaten in the classrooms. There's no auditorium—assemblies are held in the hall, which is papered with art and essays by students. The atmosphere is at once tranquil and busy.

Clark is situated in "The Island," a neighborhood not long ago notorious for its racially segregated housing and shopping area. The Island lies between the Eisenhower Expressway and the suburb of Cicero. Like Cicero and nearby Berwyn, the area has undergone a significant racial change in recent years. Once an all-white ethnic stronghold, The Island is now nearly half Hispanic, with a sprinkling of African-American families. This change is reflected in the composition of Clark Elementary, whose student body is 40 percent white, 40 percent Hispanic and 19 percent African-American.



Clark is the only neighborhood institution offering services to children in The Island, and it is the area's only multiracial institution. What could have been a social calamity, with warring parents devastating the school, has instead been a productive, thoughtful process of change. From it, the school has emerged as a leader in multicultural education.

For 50 years, Clark was a branch of other area schools. In the 1980s it was a branch of Key. "But the resources—computers, programs, ancillary staff—wound up at the main building, and the branch only got scraps," says a parent. "When reform came in [in 1989], we wanted to be our own school, not a branch. We wanted our own LSC and our own principal." The Board of Education agreed to the request of the Clark parents and staff, and the school was established with the birth of school reform. Within three years, according to the local school council, the student population had grown by 28 percent. Some even transferred from nearby parochial schools as Clark's reputation grew.

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Clark's lack of space has defined its classroom organization and helped shape its curriculum. Every class is multi-grade. There's a combined kindergarten and first-grade room, as well as combined classrooms for grades one and two, three and four, five and six. An upper-cycle room is shared by sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. Each classroom shares one teacher and one teacher's aide, except for the first-second-grade room, which has two full-time teachers. "We opted to spend some more money in primary to really stoke up the reading skills," says principal Brown.

With combined classes at all grade levels, Clark's staff has become expert at what they term "curriculum compacting," which involves continuous regrouping of children based on their achievement in given areas. "We use a lot of pre-testing before a unit or new skill is introduced," says teacher Carole Fisher. "This helps us to move children into activity groups, so you may have some third- and fourth-graders working together on multiplication, while another group in the same classroom is moving on to a new math operation.

"We don't want to hold back any child who can demonstrate mastery of a particular skill or concept, and we want to make sure we catch the kids who need more time and experience on a topic," says Fisher.

A conscious effort is made to create "interc rricular" units—schoolwide thematic units that are collectively planned by the staff. For example, a schoolwide unit on dinosaurs taught children about time lines (a social studies skill), measurement (a math skill) and paleontology and geology (two science disciplines). Dinosaur poems and stories were the featured literary theme. The question, "What was your neighborhood like in the Cretaceous period?" touched off a discussion of prehistoric Chicago.

Children usually remain in each classroom for two years. Teachers recall only one recent case of a child being held back. "This system really helps to minimize failure," Fisher says. "Our small size gives us the advantage of being able to get to know each child and to look at needs and learning styles."

Clark uses a "club meeting" format to provide enrichment activities for all grade levels. For instance, there are twice-weekly meetings of "Mathematics Workshop" for grades 3 and 4, and another math workshop for primary students; students in grades 5 through 8 can attend a Pre-Algebra Workshop.

The hot spot at Clark is the computer lab, where students vie for "open lab time." Here, everything from games to programming to desktop publishing are learned. Primary students use the computer lab at least twice a week, and they write story books on computers, often retelling stories read to them in class. They illustrate their books, which are then bound and proudly displayed.

Fisher, a Golden Apple award winner, teaches all the computer classes, coordinates the enrichment clubs and supervises the learning disabilities computer lab. Some 20 children with learning disabilities use the computers daily in a self-paced, skill-building program.

She is also responsible for the school's unusual humanities curriculum—five-week cycles on various topics. These classes are open to all children—kindergarten through 8th grade—but each

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child must apply by producing an essay that tells why he or she is interested in the topic. Recent topics have included explorers, mathematical art, geography and ancient Egypt. During the Egypt unit, students learned to interpret glyphs and designed their own glyphs and mummies.

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With only 170 students, Clark's state Chapter I budget is tiny. Most of it is used to pay teacher aides for each of the multigrade classrooms. The local school council has fewer dollars to work with than a larger school would have, and fewer places within the schoolhouse to locate any programs or equipment they might purchase. (One recent purchase was a compressor, which is used by the maintenance crew to remove gang graffiti from the building.)

There is no public library within walking distance of the school, nor a Park District field house; no place close by for indoor sports or evening programs, no room in the school large enough to accommodate all the parents and students at the same time.

For the concept of "small schools" to work optimally, the physical resources that help define an American school ought to be present, unless the school community has elected to do without them and rely instead on the city's resources, including museums, galleries and universities.

While the Board of Education has repeatedly promised to build an addition for Clark School, the waiting seems endless. And there is always the risk that, if an addition is constructed, the school might then become crowded and lose some of its special closeness. Clark parents have heard stories about other schools that got rehabbed or received additions and then became receiving schools for the relief of other, overcrowded facilities. A small school might end up becoming a big school, against its will. But that's a chance that the Clark LSC and the staff are prepared to take, for the sake of bringing together all the necessities—including a gym, library, preschool and lunchroom—under one roof.

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Staff dedication is one of Clark's chief assets. Given the tight quarters and demanding classroom loads, there's no planning time for teachers during a typical day. Instead, teachers come in early once a week to meet. Debbie Meier, principal of New York City's innovative Central Park East schools, likes to say that the ideal size for a school is one in which the faculty can fit comfortably around a conference table. The Clark staff of 10 fits nicely at the table. "What we lack in facilities, we make up for in intimacy and collaboration," says Fisher. "We are really able to discuss relationships, individual children, management issues."

But while a small school provides the basis for an intimate, family-like learning environment, the drawbacks are enormous. "Small schools are always targets on the 'hit list' for school closings," Brown says. "In fact, it's only because of school reform that we're still here. The LSC has put up a heck of a fight to keep our school open." Valuable time and energy have to be expended on rallying to keep the school open, something the majority of Chicago schools haven't had to face.

The lack of such facilities as a gym and library and the lack of adequate classroom space has caused a few parents to select private schools for their children. "It's difficult to appear competitive academically when we don't have what people are used to seeing in a school," says Brown. "For some parents, the absence of a gym is very important. They want more extra-curricular sports than we are presently able to host. Once a week, we load up a school bus with children and parents and bus them over to the Austin Branch Library. There is no neighborhood library over here, no field house, no social services. We're *it*."

He said that if the school ever gets an addition, "one of our aspirations is to be a real community center—with a gym open at night, a lighted schoolhouse program—more youth activities and adult education services."

Where it really counts, Clark students continue to show growth despite the tough conditions. Those in the third and sixth grades met or surpassed national norms on 1991 state IGAP tests, and in the first year of testing of Clark students as an independent school, five of seven grade levels were at or above national norm levels. More than half the current teaching staff has been selected by the local school council, as was the principal.

Tim Moweryta, an actor from Urban Gateways, recalled a recent performance of a short musical about animals—"Species I Have Known"—at George Rogers Clark. "This was a real challenge," he told students, "We never did it in such a small space before." But despite the constraints, he *did* do it, and that's the spirit that's moving Clark forward.

Learning Points

Looking at these schools and hearing their stories, a few common features stand out. The schools are, by and large, well-anchored in their communities. They have tapped into the energies of long-time residents, including parents and neighbors who may have attended the schools themselves. They have formed links with community organizations and agencies to enhance the schools' offerings. And they are regarded in the community as "good" schools.

The schools are innovative. They use a variety of strategies to promote the self-esteem, self-expression and internal strength of their students. These strategies include:

- Expanding activities in the visual and performing arts.
- Creating after-school social and sports activities.
- Expanding counseling and social-work interventions to help students and their families.
- Developing collectively planned, schoolwide teaching themes.
- Using technology creatively, both for students and adults.
- Welcoming adult members of the community into the schools in multiple roles.

At several schools in this report, parents assist teachers as instructors in the classrooms. At Nobel, parents are present in every classroom assisting with reading and bilingual instruction. In other schools, principals cautioned against mentioning the full scope of parent instructional roles, for fear of conflict with the teachers' union.

At each school in this report, parent education is a big part of daily life. Programs such as the Family Study Institute and adult basic education classes, including literacy classes, are held in the buildings during regular school hours. One school, Hefferan, is unique in its hiring of a full-time human relations specialist who helps solve problems that may be causing such problems as truancy, absenteeism and illness. In the absence of a full-time social worker, parent volunteer coordinators in many of these schools, paid with state Chapter I dollars, are helping to remove obstacles to fuller parent roles.

Even in the best of schools, the physical conditions are grossly deteriorated and even dangerous. And yet, great things are taking place inside. Parents and staff have attempted to ameliorate the immediate building conditions with bright decorations and student

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artwork, painting and cleaning up play yards. But the more important struggle, at several schools, was to improve the conditions by working with the Board of Education, the Chicago Public Building Commission and other agencies to repair, replace or expand the buildings. The importance of these struggles in the reform process cannot be underestimated.

Despite evidence that smaller schools provide the best educational milieu, the ones cited in this report have been forced to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy just surviving. Clark School, with fewer than 200 pupils, faces an annual struggle not to be shuttered. Chicago has yet to give up on the myth that "bigger is better" when it comes to educating children. And in those schools, like Lucy Flower, that are trying to downsize and create small schools, many institutional barriers must be overcome, including obstruction from the Central Office.

In order to implement change, educators need time to examine and study their options, their student bodies and their challenges. At the schools in this study, it appears that highly effective development occurs when it is conducted *in the workplace, during working hours*. In the majority of schools profiled here, creative use of time and resources has led to new blocks of planning and study time for staff members. Staff development is generally organized in teams, and may consist of organizing study groups, attending conferences, taking courses, or meeting together in committee to write curriculum or plan programs. This is a real departure from the past practice of districtwide "inservices," a ritual resented by many teachers.

Even in the best of schools with the boldest of plans, there were glaring areas of neglect. There were few schools where the needs of special education students received as much attention as those of "regular" students. Schools continue to report lengthy delays in obtaining diagnostic services or placements for children in need; conversely, children and parents desiring "mainstream" placement for their children are not necessarily receiving the timely attention and assistance they require.

Professor William Ayers of the University of Illinois at Chicago sounds a cautionary note about school reform: "There's no such thing as instant school improvement or instant restructuring. Those who want instant restructuring say school reform isn't working. They say they can already tell. . . . [But] anybody who expects this change to be quick and easy isn't operating in the real world."

Epilogue

In September of 1993, the Chicago Board of Education faced a shortfall of more than $250 million, a teachers union that wanted more, not less and a political stalemate in the Illinois Legislature, which held the keys to a resolution of the financial mess. Calling on *all* parties to sacrifice, the Board had made severe budget cuts.

Perhaps most painful among these was the decision, subsequently ratified by the Chicago Teachers Union, to change the internal schedule in Chicago's 60 high schools. The standard school day henceforth would be six 50-minute classes instead of seven 40-minute classes and a 10-minute homeroom. Since fewer classes made up the school day, fewer teachers were needed. And since an early retirement offer had left plenty of vacancies in schools, the board was able to cut hundreds of teaching jobs through attrition, in the hope of trimming its deficit without laying anyone off.

Superintendent Argie Johnson argued that the change also would improve learning, by expanding the amount of time spent on each subject and reducing the number of study halls. However, schools lost valuable flexibility—for example, the ability to schedule common planning periods for teachers who worked with the same kids. Further, the change seriously reduced the number of courses a school could offer. For many high schools, it meant the elimination of "non-core" or elective classes in foreign languages, the arts, and sports—courses that can maintain or spark a student's interest in attending school; courses that can help students qualify for financial aid for college; courses that can make the difference between staying in school or dropping out.

The staff cuts came only days before the opening of school. Delegations of high school principals met with the superintendent in an unsuccessful attempt to reverse the decision.

"What we went through I hope we never have to go through again," recalls Principal Ed Klunk of Amundsen High School. "We learned about the rescheduling on Wednesday at 1 p.m., and we had to have it all done by Monday morning" for nearly 2,000 students.

"We had been offering each student seven and eight classes when we had at least seven periods a day to work with," Klunk says. "But now, with the rescheduling plus staff cuts, we could only continue to program kids at this level if we kept kids in class and teachers on the job until 5:30 or 5:45 p.m."

Amundsen lost 22 of its 92 faculty members, mostly from the business department. "We lost a lot of the school year," Klunk says, because late reprogramming caused a ripple effect on everything—room assignments, textbook orders, the ability to offer every student the classes he or she needed.

At Lucy Flower, with its complex of classroom and on-the-job classes, the rescheduling "caused havoc," relates Principal Dorothy Williams. "We had to start over from scratch." Williams and her staff also had to work hard to retrieve students who, discouraged by the disruption, teetered on the brink of dropping out of school.

And at Harper High School, the "schools-within-the-school" programs were nearly destroyed by staff cuts and rescheduling. Only a concerted effort by staff and parents managed to save the STARS and COMETS programs from elimination.

Under the early retirement program, some 300 principals and more than 2,000 teachers retired in late August of 1993, sending principals and local school councils scrambling to fill the vacancies that remained after the position cuts. Among the early retirees were principals Anita Broms of Howland and James Corcoran of Davis Developmental, who were replaced by George Dalin and Rochelle Ruddick, respectively. In September of 1994, Clark's principal, Bruce Brown, left to assume the leadership of a larger elementary school in the northwest suburbs. He was replaced by Sandy Anast. By all accounts, the programs described in this report under the leadership of these former principals remain in place.

The talents and leadership of principals in the vanguard of restructuring have not gone unrecognized. Barbara Moore Pulliam, principal of Harper High School, joined the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, N.C. As word of Hefferan School's turn-around spread, Principal Patricia Harvey was named executive assistant to the superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools. (Pulliam and Harvey have been replaced by Richard S. Parker and Denise Little, respectively.)

By mid-1994, numerous talented, reform-minded principals had been plucked from their schools to take up posts in the central administration, or in other school systems. The departure of these individuals is a matter of concern not only at the affected schools. The instructional leader, often the initiator and protector of restructuring efforts, ends up being 'rewarded' by being offered another position.

In these schools, new leadership has come forward to keep programs in motion. "After all," commented a Harper teacher, "if it all depended on just one person, it wouldn't last anyway."

Teaching is a labor of love, and in the schools described in this report, people are not willing to let go of the progress they've made. If anything, the crisis of 1993 brought school communities closer together, bringing out students in defense of their teachers. In these schools, there is emerging leadership, not despair.

With vision, open debate, information, resources and time, the schools profiled here are cutting a path toward a new concept of public education in Chicago.